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## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON







*for me*

A LETTER FROM ARMAGEDDON

# Letters from Armageddon

## *A Collection Made During The World War*

BY  
AMY GORDON GRANT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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*And he gathered them together into a place called in the  
Hebrew tongue ARMAGEDDON.*

The Revelation of Saint John the Divine, xvi, 14

241557



## FOREWORD

THESE letters came into the possession of my wife from a variety of sources. Among others, from relatives and friends in Canada, whose sons volunteered in 1914, and from a sister stationed at hospitals from France to Mesopotamia. The interest inspired by the letters led to the suggestion that she give semi-public readings in aid of War Relief. This she did from 1915 until the entry of the United States into the War. Very soon after, she met with a serious motor accident which made it impossible for her to continue her War Relief work.

By means of her readings in public, in the United States and Canada, at least ten thousand dollars were raised and distributed to War Charities in this country and abroad. So individual and graphic are the letters that after this lapse of years they seem to my wife and me to possess a human quality which justifies their publication. It is her hope that the readers of to-day will derive from them a moving and unforgettable picture of the realities of Armageddon.

## FOREWORD

Permission to print the letters has been asked and obtained from every donor whose name was known.

ROBERT GRANT

## NOTE

To hear Mrs. Grant read letters from the heart of the War has been for me the strongest experience of the kind I have ever known. She is fortunate in the possession of letters so vivid and simple that they stir the listener to his depths.

She is also fortunate in her power to read these letters with a vividness and simplicity that match their content well. The impression is unforgettable. One is moved by it as only either the truest life or the greatest art can ever move.

OWEN WISTER



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# Letters from Armageddon

1914

## *The Battle of Mons*

British Expeditionary Force  
In Active Service  
August 29, 1914

MY DEAR MR. —

Thanks for your inspiring and kind letter received on point of leaving England.

Well, sir, the angels must have guarded me up to now. How I am living I can't know. I had my pants blown off my back, and my cap taken away, and trousers torn thigh to knee with bullets or pieces of shrapnel, and I am still kicking. I expended eighty rounds on them, and I have had a good share of German blood. On Tuesday afternoon we were shelled out of our trenches. We marched about seventy miles in two days and nights. On Tuesday night we marched all night, and on Wednesday morning at 6 A.M., we marched to our position, footsore and exhausted, in a cornfield slightly elevated, and we — the Sergeants — called the roll, some companies examining rifles, some companies taking their

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

equipment off, when all at once without warning, without even our scouts or anybody else knowing, hell itself with terrible fury let itself spread over us with three Maxims; shrapnel and a tornado of bullets. Down we went flat on our stomachs, bullets flashing past our ears like bees round a pot of jam. Oh! what a sight! Legs and arms in all directions. Then we dashed for cover — our cookhouse and transport horses blown up — and then the boys in khaki rallied, and we fought the devils all day. We held them at bay, and beat them, although they were ten to one. I can assure you that any Germans there will take their hats off to Tommy after that. Well, we fought them this way and that, and then our artillery got in action and they did splendid work. I saw two thousand blown to pieces. That's the way to tickle them up! The French should have been on the German flanks, but were several hours late. However, England's men held the whole lot at bay, and we defied them, but we have all suffered terribly. We had only about three hundred and odd strong out of 1072. We fought all day and had marched all night and next day, when we were surprised. One youngster under me had both legs 'blown off!' he said with a smile on his face. Another, my Captain, smiled at me, and

## THE BATTLE OF MONS

those in sight, with his eye on his cheek. Another had his hand blown off, and he walked along, sad but firm. Another had his chin blown off. A Corporal of ours, who has a bullet right through his chest, is still living. I saw horses disembowelled, and, poor devils, they looked so pitiful; they seemed to say 'What have we done?' I took cover behind a dead horse for an hour, and I whipped some bullets in them I can assure you. I took deadly aim. One sight I saw will be engraved in my brain till I die. There were four little children in the village of —— crossing the street preparing to depart—the oldest a girl dark and slender and about the age of your daughter—when a shell came screaming over the house and blew them to pieces. Some woman relative, I suppose, who was sitting on a doorstep, had her throat taken completely away, her head leaning over her shoulder. The look of horror on her face I shall never forget. Now, sir, is that playing the game? The tears, I confess, rolled down my cheeks. It almost made me a fiend after with rage. Well, that is a little of war. Poor little dears! The Germans would have done more, but we held them, as outnumbered as we were, to their chagrin. Well, now a little of the other, the heroic. I shall tell you just two instances of

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

British pluck. A party of about 150 Uhlans broke into the village, and Captain Clutterback was defending the Church with a handful of men (the wounded and refugees were there), when the German officer demanded his surrender three times 'in the name of the King Emperor.' Clutterback, who was a ranker, told him to go to hell, and his Emperor too, and told him that we never surrender. Clutterback was riddled, but the boys rushed out of the Church and poured volleys into them and chased them out of the town. Another, Captain Parker, got off from us and marched his men (about two hundred) right through the German lines. What do you think of that?

The French have been so kind to us and it has made my heart ache to see the villagers burnt out of house and home. The fruit is grand, but the cigarettes and matches rotten.

Well, good-bye. Please remember me to the children and I pray God Almighty that you and yours never see the heartrending sights of modern warfare. The ingenuity of man is indeed devilish. The guns are booming in the distance and the aeroplanes are flying. We brought one down. Please remember me to all, and remember, we win if every man of us is wiped out.

Yours sincerely.



# THE PATHFINDER TORPEDOED

## *The Pathfinder*

From a young English naval officer, aged nineteen, to his mother. He had sent a telegram to his mother assuring her of his safety; which fortunately reached her one hour before a message from the Admiralty announcing the blowing up of the Pathfinder and stating that her son was missing.

H.M.S. Tyne

September 6, 1914

DEAR MA,

I don't know if the news is in the papers, but I sent off a telegram at once, in case it did get in.

This is *my* account.

At 3.50 P.M. Saturday, the officers were all having tea in the wardroom. We were startled by an explosion forward — a lot of débris came through the skylight and landed on the wardroom table, and all the lights went out. All the officers went up on deck, and we found that the fore end of the ship had been blown off, the mast, fore bridge and fore funnel. The boats had all been smashed except the steam boat, which couldn't be got out. A torpedo had hit us on the starboard side just abreast of the magazine, and they exploded simultaneously. There was no panic, and no mock heroics. All the men forward were killed outright, the officer of the bridge as well. The Captain got some of the hands who

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

were aft and cleared the after gun, loaded it and fired. This to attract attention of May Island, which was northeast of us seventeen miles.

I was on the after bridge at the time. I turned round and heard the engine-room bulkheads give way and the ship rushed down about forty feet, the water just coming to the level of the after bridge. At that moment there were no live men in the water, but about twenty dead. The First Lieutenant gave the order to jump away from the ship, and about one hundred men and officers did jump. When I left the ship the Captain was the only live man on board, as far as I know. I dived in and the rush of water carried me away from the ship about one hundred yards. There was a lot of wreckage about, and I got hold of something. I don't know what it was. Then I looked back and saw the stern pointing vertically up in the air. There was a strong tide, and I was being carried away from the ship towards the shore. The last thing I noticed before swimming off was the Captain hanging on to the quarter-deck sail. Then I swam on. I soon got hold of a large box and this supported me for about five minutes, till I saw the Surgeon. He had got a life belt on, but one leg was broken and he was unconscious. I got a large plank and put him on it, lashing him

## IN THE WATER

with the life belt. I rubbed his arms and shouted at him, and woke him up, and then he was all right. Then I found about twelve life belts and distributed them to ten men who were hanging on to bits of wood; two of them sank while I was fixing their belts, but the rest were all right.

I didn't want to take off my monkey jacket because I had four pounds in it, but I took it off then, with trousers and boots and put on a life belt, as I didn't know how long it would be before help arrived. Then I looked round for the ship, but she had sunk. There was a lot of wreckage about and the water was very dirty. I got one of the cutters and sat on it. This must have been three quarters of an hour after I had got into the water, for I saw two destroyers and two torpedo boats coming straight for us. There were five men sitting on a buoy about two hundred yards from me and one of them stood up and waved to them. There were about twenty men near me, and I told them to cheer. They did — lustily. The destroyers didn't hear us, but it kept their spirits up. About twenty minutes later the destroyers arrived and I swam to the nearest, the Stag. They hadn't seen the explosion, but May Island had, and ordered them out to us. Some one on the Stag threw me a rope and I climbed on board,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

feeling very cold, but without a scratch on me. A stoker took me, rubbed me with a towel, and put me up in his hammock, where I got warm after half an hour. Then I got out, put on a blanket and went down to the wardroom. Then I was rigged out by the Sub-Lieutenant and after a bit the Stag was sent back to Queensferry. I got to the Stag at 5.15 P.M., having left the Pathfinder at 4 P.M. exactly. The Stag had thirty-two men on board, of whom seven were officers. The Surgeon was brought on board, unconscious, and he was brought round in about an hour, after much massaging. Then we were all transferred to the Liberty hospital ship, where the First Lieutenant met us. He had been picked up by a torpedo boat, unhurt. The Captain had been picked up by the other torpedo boat in a very exhausted condition. He was bathed in rum and brought round, but he was suffering from shock. Altogether, forty-nine were saved, of whom ten were officers. Of the men, about ten were wounded, two of them seriously. The whole complement was twenty officers and three hundred and eleven men. One officer wounded, one died.

The submarine that sunk us was seen before, and when, she fired the torpedo. The engines had

## MINE-LAYING

been reversed about forty-five seconds before the torpedo struck us — too late.

Weather conditions — Bright sun, no wind, moderate swell. Tide flooding towards shore. Was rather cold, about 52° F., I think.

I am going to Gieve at Edinburgh tomorrow to get a new kit.

Your loving son

E. O. S.

### *Laying Mines in the Straits of Dover*

From the Admiral, commanding the fleet charged with the defence of the East Coast of England.

H.M.S. Forth  
Dover, October 4, 1914

---

I daresay you noticed in yesterday's paper that the Admiralty, or rather the Government, has announced that they had found it necessary to lay mines in a certain area to the northeast of the Straits of Dover. This was done at my pressing instigation on account of the presence of German submarines in the English Channel, which we cannot make certain of keeping out by any other means. I don't like mines. They are a vile instrument of war. But there is an honest and a dishonest way of using them. If you place mines

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

in a certain sea area, and tell the whole world that they are there, no ship can come to grief except by wilful disregard of your warning. That is the honest way. The Germans, on the other hand, scatter mines wholesale and say nothing about it. The result has been the loss of many peaceful merchant ships belonging to countries which are not engaged in the war. That is the dishonest way. Ever since the war began I have been endeavoring to get the Admiralty to do what they at last see to be advisable, and they are practically carrying out my suggestions in every important point, so I am well pleased about it. It will save the officers under me a great deal of anxiety in this part of my sphere of responsibility. I am so glad that a keen and capable officer like Colonel B—— should have the good luck to see historic service in the higher ranks. I envy him the fortune of fighting with a more or less visible enemy. My poor fellows lost their lives without knowing that an enemy is near. Fourteen officers and two hundred and twenty men under my orders went down in the Pathfinder without seeing a glimpse of the agency that worked the deed. Twice within the past week vessels under my command in the Straits of Dover have escaped a similar fate by a hair's



## THE SUBMARINE DANGER

breadth. In neither case did they suspect the presence of an enemy till they saw a torpedo rushing at them through the water; and on each occasion it was only the nerve and promptitude of the officer on the bridge in handling the ship that enabled them to avoid it. A moment's hesitation or error of judgment would have lost the ship. The Admiralty will not allow these incidents to be reported in the papers, as they fear that they may cause undue alarm. So the work of the bluejackets is not done in the limelight. But every officer and man knows from the moment of leaving harbour he is in hourly danger of being blown to pieces without a moment's warning, till he gets into port again. The worst of it is that we cannot retaliate in the same way. The German ships obstinately refuse to come out, whereas we are compelled to keep a certain number of ours at sea, as a safeguard against invasion and attack on our food supplies and there are always targets for the enemy's submarines and mines. It is no exaggeration to say that the 'man in the street' in the British Isles eats a good dinner and sleeps soundly in his bed because the bluejacket is in perpetual danger of a terrible death, although the former does not always realize it, I daresay.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

I am fit myself, I am thankful to say, although I shall be badly in need of a rest when the war is over. Much love.

### *In Germany*

To a friend in Montreal.

Stuttgart, *September 6, 1914*

MY DEAR BESSIE,

I got your letter of June 21st in Norway, and since then it seems as if another world had taken us up instead of the good old fair one, in which, after a sad and sorrowful life, I hoped to spend the evening of my life in the rays of a soft, calm sunset. And now! Sorrow, fear for my boy's life, despair, poverty, everything is grinning at me, and every woman in Germany, with cruel, relentless eyes. I will not tell you about our stay in Norway with its renewed many tokens and signs of the Kaiser's graciousness and kindness to me; it seems far back like years — things that one dare not remember as too beautiful and incredible for present times. As steamships had stopped going to Germany, we had to go by land. The railways were bursting with German travellers and excursionists rushing home. Trains were delayed; no food to be got; and once in Germany,



## MOBILIZATION

we got right into the tremendous mobilization of our wonderful army. We were three days and three nights in the train, never resting, always sitting up in crammed carriages, sometimes even third and fourth class, wherever we could find room in the general rush. In Hamburg I found a letter from Franz, who had himself, of course, put at once again at the disposal of his old regiment and had been made aide-de-camp to a Brigade-General in the Crown Prince's army. He implored me not to try to come here, where his quarters were, as it was impossible to get through, *all* the rails being given up to military trains, and said, that it would be all the harder for him and me, if we were to meet before he left. He wrote so lovingly and affectionately, so tremendously enthusiastic. He asked my pardon for anything that he might ever have unwittingly done to grieve me. I know, I shall never see him again. Last year, when he left the army against my most ardent wishes, my only consolation was that, in case of war, he need not take part in it, and now? I would bury myself in shame and despair, if he had remained at home. Well, I started to come here, and was seventy-two hours without a rest again or proper food, on a distance which, in other times, is done in thirteen hours.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

But, in spite of all, I would not miss that trip, for it showed me day and night, a hundred times in every hour, the wonderful organization (in ten days and nights there has not been one military train *one* minute late), the self-sacrifice of women and boys in tending to the needs of the soldiers at every station, the reliableness of every official, high or low, and the tremendous enthusiasm and confidence in their officers and the Kaiser of all the soldiers. Why, they were shouting and laughing, decorating the cars and themselves with green boughs and flowers, singing patriotic songs, bescribbling the sides of the cars with funny and daring inscriptions like, 'for Paris,' 'for St. Petersburg,' 'ten French heads for a penny,' 'room for 100,000 French prisoners'; and so on. At one station, where I had to wait five hours, for civilians were only forwarded when there was room, twelve huge long trains stopped with hundreds of soldiers in each. And in that time, within ten minutes, every man could sit down at a table, was served with soup, tea, meat, vegetables and cheese, and regaled by ladies with cigars, postal cards and so on. At *every* station ladies went along the trains with buckets full of tea, lemonade, and sandwiches, washtubs with lukewarm water, where they could wash face and

## VOLUNTEERS

hands, stood about at every few feet on the platforms with towels and soap. It was desperately hot, yet these ladies and boys stood to their duty by day and night, and are doing so still with the wounded who are taken home in all directions. A wonderful organization, and not a drop of alcohol allowed anywhere. Yet the soldiers, even the reserves, almost all married men, are as jolly and sure of wonderful victories, which in verity we are gaining everywhere. Of course, abroad the lies about us are circulating and being believed. Why, we have taken Belgium with its terrible fortresses — Liège, Namur and others; Brussels is ours and the whole East and Northeast of France; there isn't a single fortress, except Belfort and Maubeuge, which hasn't capitulated, and our advance-guards are before Paris. There are two million sound and strong men volunteering, which, so far, for some reason or other had not to serve; we are having men, peasants or gentlemen, committing suicide for having been refused as unfit. We do not hate and despise the French, for they are in their right when they seek revenge from us, and try to reconquer Alsace and Lorraine; we do not hate the Russians, a poor, misguided people, who are led like sheep to the slaughter without knowing why; but we hate and

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

despise the English who make war against us from mere mercenary reasons; a brother-people, who have been lying and intriguing against us for years, while, to our face, they are making-believe friendship, desire for peace, good-will and what not. And now they are siding with murderous Regicides, like the Serbs, with barbarous Russians, yes, even the yellow race they are be-friending in order to crush us. Traitors, vile traitors, the shame they will be branded with will not be washed off for centuries to come; they will be despised by the whole world, even by their Allies, forever and ever. Violating the rights of nations, the national laws by using Dum-Dum cartridges, by closing the Suez Canal; by capturing and sinking the enemy's ships in neutral waters; arresting *neutral* powers' war-ships, which are in construction, without any excuse whatever — ah, shame, shame! I, for my part, I have to strike out something in my life; my love and respect and gratitude for the English, amongst whom I've lived and been happy. Never again will I seek their society, as I have done all my life. I shall shun them like dirt and poison. Of course you and half the world don't know how we have already beaten them and made them run like hares near St. Quentin; that

## HATRED OF ENGLAND

we have taken nine thousand English prisoners, and that they have, so far, not dared to face us again on land or on water. Of course, what can a paid army do against one who is fighting for wife and child, good and blood, the Fatherland? When the French prisoners are led past in the streets, not a word or sign is shown by the spectators; they are respected, even pitied; but, when the English prisoners pass, women and children have spat at them, and nobody has forbidden them. Well, we may be crushed; the French are bringing up their African cannibal troops against us, a white people, and the English have called the Japs; but the glory will be ours, and the shame, the disdain, the hate will be dealt to the English forever and ever. Yet, we are not there yet, and our fleet is as good as intact yet, with the exception of two poor small cruisers which the brave English attacked with a force forty times as strong in number, near Heligoland. And on the Russian frontier, we won, amongst several, one battle, in which we made 90,000 prisoners. And our harvest of corn, hay, potatoes, fruit, wine, is marvellous and the like has not been heard of for years and years.

And now, dear Bessie, good-bye. After this, you will not want to have anything to do with

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

me again; and I don't blame you, for I will neither have anything to do again with an English person, if I can help it. Thank you again and again for your lifelong friendship, for which I've ever been very, very grateful. If Franz falls, you shall know of it. My existence is terror, fear, anxiety, yet, if I could gain my country's victory by my boy's death, I would sacrifice him ten times over again, and so every woman thinks with me in Germany. I remain here, until all is over for me.

Yours sincerely.

### *The Siege of Antwerp, August 4*

France, October 23, 1914

Antwerp was quite a new experience for me, as I had never been 'under fire' and I really got more than my share of it out there. It was 4 A.M. in the morning of October 4th that we were suddenly awakened in Cassel, a little town twenty miles east of Dunkirk, by the arrival of Winston Churchill, with the order to leave at once for Antwerp: we got to Antwerp about noon and were greeted like 'saviours'; at once our men went out to the line of trenches, where Winnie was already in observation, very Napoleon-like



## SEVEN HEADQUARTERS

with the tails of his blue coat floating in the wind, his stalking glasses on one side and his hands behind his back! I was attached all through to the General in command of the English forces, a most charming 'boss' and we went out to the headquarters on the firing line, a delightful old Dutch mill. Well, we had scarcely been there for one hour before shells began pouring upon us, and two hours later there was nothing left of the mill but a heap of smoking ruins. It was the characteristic of that Antwerp job the Germans knew every single thing; their spy system was wonderful. We changed our headquarters seven times in five days and every time a couple of hours after we had moved into a new place, German shells would begin falling upon the building and we sooner or later would have to evacuate the place. They knew where all our supplies, ammunitions, etc., were stored in the town and made a point of shelling them until only the walls of the building were left.

Our men behaved splendidly in the trenches, but we had no artillery; we didn't possess one *single* gun; the Belgian guns were hopeless and the powerful German pièces de siège simply had it all their own. So from the start it was a hopeless job; we did some good in one way, as no

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

doubt the town would have surrendered on that famous Sunday, hadn't we arrived in Antwerp and restored confidence by making the town last five days more, we gave the Belgian army a chance of retreating instead of surrendering. 'Winnie' was with us for three days, playing the part of a sort of Nelson-on-land, running up and down the firing line and cursing everybody.

On the morning of October the 8th, as the Germans had begun bombarding the town the night before, we retired inside the inner line of forts; most of them were only a mass of ruins; it was a ghastly day, as no place was safe. I had my nearest escape when a shell burst right at the back of a car in which I was with the General, and simply blew off the two back wheels. The chauffeur was wounded and another car coming behind was smashed to atoms! The town was bombarded systematically 'in sections,' and by noon, fire was raging all over the place; the shells were coming at the rate of one every ten seconds. About two o'clock we moved inside the town; it was a shocking sight; the streets torn up by the shells, houses burning, a mass of *débris* falling all round; dead bodies lying about, a tram full of passengers which had been hit by a shell, dead horses, and no sign of life — except for errant



## THE RETREAT FROM ANTWERP

dogs and cattle which had been left behind by the refugees and were wandering about. At 6 P.M. the General ordered the retreat; this was a most anxious moment, as there is only one bridge across the Scheldt and it is a pontoon bridge, very narrow; it was the only means of escape and an endless crowd of refugees, all the Belgian army and all our own troops had got to cross that single bridge. The huge naphtha tanks had been set alight and the tanks were exploding one by one, and flames were spreading everywhere. As long as I live I shall never forget that night; I stood with the General at the head of the bridge from seven until twelve. A dark night wonderfully lighted up by the burning town, the increasing whistling of the shells, and the unceasing stream of human beings, the poor helpless refugees were too heartbreaking; just like animals walking on to unknown destinations, tired, so tragic, with crowds of children and old people. I shall never forget all that. At last the last of our men got through and then began that long march through the night, along a narrow road crowded with lorries, wagons, cars, cattle! *Knowing* the Germans were trying to cut us off and on our right the Dutch frontier only a mile off. Why the Germans did not cut us off nobody

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

knows. A couple of machine guns would have done! We got to Bruges at 6 P.M. next day. I had not taken off my clothes or had any sleep, except for three hours, for five days; and as for food, I had had nothing to eat for thirty-four hours! Never in my life have I felt so *dead* as I did when I arrived in Bruges. Next day we moved to Ostend, then peu-à-peu to General Headquarters where I met many French friends who were quite 'épaté' to see me in khaki. Robert de Rothschild, a couple of Murats, are out here as interpreters to the English staff and live in luxury; pheasants, Rolls-Royce cars, choice fruits! Jimmie Rothschild had his trousers torn off by a shrapnel! Things are pretty bright out here and there is a certain feeling of confidence. There is no doubt the Germans have got designs on Calais and Boulogne; it was their objective, but they have failed so far. They must be using now all their resources in the way of men, as some of the prisoners we took are real *children*, delighted to be made prisoners, and we even captured yesterday a hunchback! The Indian troops went up to the front yesterday and it will be most interesting to see what they can do; they are a fine body of men and look fierce and spend all their spare time sharpening their

## OFF THE BELGIAN COAST

swords on grindstones in public squares, which created tremendous excitement among the natives.

### *Monitors off the Belgian Coast*

From Commander E. F.

H.M.S. Severn

October 24, 1914

Here we are back again having fired away another three hundred six-inch shells waiting for the steamer to come in. I hope to get away again tonight.

I am awfully tickled with the papers, especially the 'Daily Telegraph,' with the column about these wonderful monitors, when every one has always told me what a fool I was to come to them and what rotten ships they were, etc. I have a squadron of six now. A submarine let off two torpedoes at the Wildfire yesterday, and on Thursday a Taube was overhead and dropped bombs very near one of the ships.

I get all signals by wireless straight from the shore and then detail the various ships what to fire at.

Yesterday afternoon a signal came to fire at... A church spire at Westende and B.C.D. other objects, so I put the other ships at B.C.D. and

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

took the church myself. The Germans had evidently been spotting from it. I sent to the gunner of the turret and told him I'd give him a bottle of champagne if he hit it. He hit it with a lyddite bomb at five thousand yards right in the middle of the tower. The second and third shots went through the roof and fourth and fifth on the tower. The shells all burst, and it really was a fine sight and a proper bit of sport.

It is really rather ghastly the whole show from Nieuport. Northward to Westende and Middelkirke the whole place is one mass of bursting shells with flames from burning houses and enormous fires. The monitors alone have fired eighteen hundred six-inch shells into this area.

To the north of Westende yesterday we spotted a German battery from the masthead by its flash. I went off on my own and fired at it and made them shift billet three times till they got out of range. I believe from all accounts the number of killed is awful among the Germans, as we have been steadily firing shells into a place called Stype, off and on the whole week. They signal to us that huge bodies of troops are so and so, and we plot it off quickly and put about twenty lyddites a minute into the spot. It must be awful.

## A DESOLATED SHORE

On Wednesday we blew up a whole ammunition column; I believe things aren't quite so good today and the Germans have got over the river. That is where they seem to gain. They work all night, whereas the Belgians and French all seem to go to sleep and do nothing, but in any case, I rather doubt the Germans being able to hold this coast at all. You see they can't see us, owing to the dunes, and if they put any spotters on the sand, we soon see them and blow them up.

It is a bit trying to one's nerves, as you may imagine, being attacked both under water, from the air, and sideways, but we have been very lucky so far.

The Belgians shelled a house in Westende yesterday and it caught fire — one of the large ones on the front — it blazed furiously the whole afternoon. Of course, the whole country is absolutely devastated and wrecked beyond anything you can imagine.

I believe the destroyers go up this afternoon to bombard the pier at Ostende. Anyway, I think you can know we have done our little bit and it's something to have been the *pièce de résistance* even for one day. We shall soon have to return and go into dock. We are pretty well broken up,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

but we are good for another week yet, I think, and it has been a tremendous experience.

I can't imagine how they keep themselves supplied with ammunition in the land forces. The enormous number of shells that are fired is practically incessant all day. The sky is always full of bursting charges. It must be hell to advance against it.

### *' The Bombardment of Rheims '*

From a granddaughter of Mrs. H. B. Williams, of Boston, who was living in Rheims.

*November 2, 1914*

Since three days we are again getting violently shelled day and night. We are now sleeping in the cellar, as bombs fall in our quarter. Mr. K.'s house has received four in two days. One fell this morning, doing quite a lot of harm. The Germans are still all around Rheims and hold exactly the same positions as two months ago; it is the forty-seventh day that R. has been the centre of action, and every single day bombs have fallen except three. One has no idea of what it is like unless one lives right in the middle of it. It is now getting very difficult to leave or come out of Rheims. There is probably a movement of troops



## RHEIMS BOMBARDED

and they want no one on the roads. We, of course, have no trains yet. One has either to walk or drive to Epernay and from there to take a train to Paris. So you see things are by no means easy and the general condition remains exactly the same. More damage is done every day and more lives lost. Somehow one gets used to all these horrors and nothing surprises one any more. I could tell you of so many things I see daily, but I forget them as fast as I see them. The worse days are probably over, although many people seem to think the contrary.

*November 4*

Here we are being shelled since fifty-one days. The Germans are still around Rheims and occupy exactly the same positions as on September 14th when they left us. Mama has probably told you of the destruction of our little house: I cannot tell you how sad I am about it. We had been settled exactly two weeks, everything was new and fresh. I was so happy to at last have a home, when on September 14th a shell hit it, bringing down the whole upper part of the house. We happened to be in the cellar and I assure you that it was by no means pleasant, the house being absolutely uninhabitable... A second shell hit

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

our poor little house two days later, spoiling the little the first one had left.... Poor Rheims is a dreadful sight. Half the town is burned down and the other half destroyed by bombs. I have been kept busy with the Red Cross and I can assure you that we see some awful sights, but the men are so brave and their confidence in the future is really wonderful.... I assure you we know what the war is like, all the horrors and privations of it. I do not enter into too many details as my letter would be endless and for those that have not seen things with their own eyes, it can be of no interest. One must have suffered and gone through what we and Rheims in general have, to really understand and measure the awful horror of this war; it is no longer a battle, but slaughter. What brutes the Germans are and how I hope the 'Kaiser' will be made to pay for his crimes inch by inch! We are all certain of the final victory, but how many poor men will be made to pay for it by giving up their lives. Ten days ago I saw fifteen hundred men go off to the front, fine, handsome English soldiers. Three days later the same battalion came back to Rheims and out of the fifteen hundred, fifty came back alive. This is only one small example of what we see every day. The hospitals are full.



## RHEIMS ON FIRE

I am working as nurse and have twelve beds in my own care. The wounds are awful, but one gets used to everything in due time.

*November 19, Lausanne*

I must say, now that we are out of it safe and sound, it was a most thrilling and wonderful experience, although terrible and so full of sadness and human suffering. I shall never during my whole lifetime forget Rheims on fire, the whole centre of the town ablaze. I was at the time in my hospital; when the fire broke out at 5 P.M. there remained for one hundred and fifty wounded there but seven nurses. All the doctors and other nurses had left the day before. How we did it, I don't know. Somehow one finds a superhuman strength when danger is so enormous. A great many poor soldiers died while being carried downstairs. Others ran out just with their nightshirts on. You can't imagine what a sight it was — that enormous hospital one mass of flames and all those wounded running about half out of their minds. We took as many as possible to the Champagne cellars and set up a miserable ambulance there. From that day on we never ceased being shelled. When we left Rheims it was our sixty-fourth day of bombard-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

ment. Can you imagine it? No one on earth can unless they have seen it. F. and I remained at the hospitals until the last man had been evacuated. Now Rheims has no more wounded, as it is considered too dangerous a town. We have come back to Lausanne to see the family. I shall go back to Paris in a few days, to the American hospital out at Neuilly, and from there shall ask to go to the front, as Paris has hardly any wounded, having had only very few bad cases. The quite small ones don't interest me in the least.

The Germans occupy very important trenches all around Rheims and it seems almost impossible to get them away, unless the authorities are willing to sacrifice fifteen to twenty thousand men.

### *Sinking of the Audacious*

From Mrs. Robert R. Faber, formerly Helen Ruthven Dexter, of Cambridge, Massachusetts. She was a passenger on the Olympic, which rescued the crew of the Audacious when she struck a mine and sank on October 27, 1914.

Admiral Jellicoe, on the Iron Duke, was at Lough Swilley when the Olympic came in.

London, *November 5, 1914*

I wrote you on Monday saying we had had a rough passage. That evening the seas got worse

## TO THE RELIEF OF THE AUDACIOUS

instead of better and we rolled so that there was very little sleep, which accounts for the fact that I was asleep at 9.30 Tuesday morning, the 27th October, when the stewardess burst in, to say that we had suddenly made a right-angle turn, and we were coming up to a group of English warships, one of which was evidently in distress. I slipped on my dressing-gown, a sweater, a long coat, a hat over my uncombed hair, put my bare feet into shoes, and rushed on deck, and in that garb I stayed until night. I shall never forget it, and my description is very inadequate of what we saw and felt that day.

The Audacious, one of the latest, largest boats, had struck a mine and was apparently rapidly sinking by the stern. The men were all standing at attention, arms crossed, and not a movement, waiting for her to go. Every moment arrived a boat, called by wireless — torpedo boats, dashing through one of the roughest seas I had ever seen, themselves so covered by spray that you could only see them by their stacks — a Red Cross boat — light cruisers, etc., etc. Not one of these carried a lifeboat. In the Navy, if you go, you go! Fifteen minutes it took for us to lower all our boats and put out thousands of gallons of oil on the seas, megaphones going, emergency hospitals

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

ready, doctors with brandy, etc., etc. Piles of life belts were thrown into every boat, and we watched them go. We were very near by this time. Several overturned as they got alongside, where the waves were washing over the stern of the Audacious and several were battered right in. We could watch the men jump. Not a man was lost, and we saved eight hundred and fifty men. About two o'clock, we could see that she was going to hold up in the bow, evidently the forward bulwarks were still tight, and Admiral Bingley, who was on board, called for a volunteer crew to remain. So a hundred men stood in the bow, with the flag, the whole stern under water, while we, with the aid of a dozen smaller boats, tried to get a hawser on board, to see if we could tow her to shore, only twenty miles away. The torpedo boats passed by us with their men just hanging on the deck, a foot deep in water, and they were joking and grinning and passing jokes with our crew. Luckily for us, we did not succeed in getting our second hawser, a huge affair, which can only be moved by a derrick, on board; the first snapped with the report of a cannon, she was so waterlogged, of course. Worth two and a half million pounds, she was, and all the latest guns on board. No wonder they do not want the



THE SINKING OF THE BRITISH SUPER-DREADNAUGHT  
AUDACIOUS

From a photograph taken by Mr. Charles M. Schwab on board  
the S.S. Olympic



## INTO LOUGH SWILLEY

Germans to know. That's their policy, as it says in Bernhardt's book: 'Reduce the superiority of the English Navy by picking them off one by one and then engage them.' Now, whether these mines were laid for us off Tory Island, or whether the Germans know that Lough Swilley is being used as a naval base, is another of the questions.

The mines, twenty-eight of them, were laid by boats under neutral flags. One Swedish boat has been found in Belfast with mines still hidden in her coal-bunkers. About seven o'clock, Tuesday evening, another bulkhead went on the *Audacious* and it was known she would soon go, as the shells were all forward, and when she was down far enough, they would ignite by concussion and explode, so the remaining crew were taken off and we were ordered away double-quick time, and two torpedoes piloted us into Lough Swilley, an impressive journey — past searchlights and with much signalling. Now, we knew and had known all day that at any moment we might strike a mine ourselves, and that, in reality, there was great danger of our doing so, but in these cases one takes the risk and I must say it was a miraculous escape. Soon after we left the *Audacious*, she blew up with a pillar of flame, which



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

looked a mile high, and an explosion like nothing I have ever heard. Had we been near, or had we had her in tow, good-bye to us. We anchored in Lough Swilley and we had our dinner, all of us very tired and very thankful to have had such an escape. The saloon was full of officers saved by us, all minus collars and in a sad state of undress, but all very cheerful and apparently calm and we thought very wonderful. We had rather an uneasy night, as there was talk of a possible German submarine in the vicinity; and we were not allowed a light, even an anchor light, and were patrolled all night long by pickets.

We were interested, even thrilled by what went on. The boats were constantly moving. Saturday about eight o'clock in the evening, a long line, torpedoes, submarines, and seven dreadnoughts, each one behind the other in a file, stole out in the fog without a light to be seen on any one. Sunday more came in.

Each day the Captain had handsome officers, splendid, tall, noble-looking men, at dinner, but we were allowed no communication with the shore, were told nothing and given no reasons, but how can you keep a secret if you let loose some twelve hundred people? I have no idea that people will say nothing, even although we



## TO BELFAST

were all asked for the good of the Empire not to talk, but we were not required to take an oath.

One evening, our master-at-arms rushed down to the dining-saloon, and called out, 'All lights out but one'; and a woman cried, 'Why, oh, why?' and he politely answered, 'Expense, Madame,' which I thought very clever.

Tuesday, November 3, we came slowly up Belfast Harbor, under army arrest.

The Olympic had been in all the papers and they all think we put in to avoid mines and were simply held there until the route had been swept for us.

### *A French Mother to her Son*

From a Frenchwoman to her son who was in service in Boston.

St. Pierre, *November, 1914*

Your country needs you. Your four brothers have been killed in her defence. Unless you come, you are no longer a son of mine. I will have no coward in my family.

# LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

## *Life in the Trenches*

From a British officer.

19 November, 1914

This is the thirteenth day in the trenches, at least I think so, but I can hardly tell, and I have experienced everything but a bayonet charge and a wash. We have been holding trenches in a pine wood, at least it *was* a pine wood — now it is matchwood, soaked, splintered, spattered with wet and blood. There has been no hand-to-hand fighting. It has all been done by shell and rifle fire and pneumatic bombs. The German main trench runs in a line the nearest point of which is five hundred yards, and farthest thirteen hundred yards from us. But in between, they have been burrowing up, and in the last few days, when I have been scout-master, I have discovered subsidiary trenches, pits, and dug-outs from one hundred to thirty yards off our line. You can't see them because of the tangled wood, but you can hear the men digging and hacking as soon as you creep five yards out, and I myself have constantly in the last few days been within thirty yards. This morning I shot at four men in a pit at a range of five yards in the weird light of a damp and frozen November dawn. It was

## SNIPING

all like a dream, seeing a phantom spade rising and falling behind a mound of damp earth, creeping up pistol in hand through broken boughs and small tree trunks, peeping down into a six-foot pit, sighting four ghostly blue-grey figures and punctuating the whole grey unreality with four red pistol flashes. I didn't wait long — I may have hit one or two, but the others had rifles in their hands by this time and their main line of dug-outs was twenty yards in front of me. I turned, called the two scouts who were with me, and fled. (I am going to tell you what a blood-thirsty brave man I am, because I don't know when I shall be hit — though somehow I feel confident I shall come through and I want to leave a testimony. You'll think I'm a savage. Sniping is little better than murder.)

No one who hasn't seen this can realize what it is like. The Germans have a hell of a machine which has been brought into play against our trenches in the last three days. Shot from a distance of three hundred yards a long two-foot projectile, which one can watch at all points in its flight, goes high into the air and comes almost plumb down on the point aimed at. It is called, I believe, a *Minenwerfer*, two hundred pounds of shell. A special corner of our line, not our com-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

pany's section, thank God, has been their special aim. They put these infernal bombs into a circle of thirty yards' radius. They smash in the trenches, blow men to bits, stupefy, deafen and poison others. I had the escape of my life yesterday afternoon. I offered to go down with my scouts and some home-made bombs left us by the R.E. in order to return the compliment. I walked down with three scouts and the orderly from C Company. Just as we entered the little wood, through which the Company's trenches run, a bomb exploded eight to ten yards in front of me. I don't know whether I was the first or the orderly. At any rate, he collapsed into the wood, half bolting, half falling. He was really unhurt, but much shaken. I got a slight scratch above the eye, but remained on my feet, and was really quite unaffected; a man behind me was knocked over; I think he fell from fright. At any rate, he was as one stricken with palsy, and went sick today. The next man fell, I think, but was quite unhurt. My scout corporal, last of the five, ten or twelve yards from the burst, was killed straight. I saw the medical orderly about him afterwards, who said it was not a wound which killed him, but shock and poisoned gases. It's an extraordinary explosive; it blows huge holes in

## RELIEF

the ground, crushes in the trenches, and if it falls on a man, knocks him to pieces, though it may let off his neighbour with a scratch and a nervous shock which may last a day or two. All yesterday C Company was sending in little dribblets of men, who are more like jibbering idiots than human beings.

*Next day, 20th*

I am feeling better today. Last night we were relieved — another uncanny process. An officer from each Company to be relieved proceeds in the dark to meet the relieving troops. It snowed yesterday and sleeted. In the afternoon it was like a Christmas picture in the woods. At night it was uncanny, with the white boughs against deep darkness, lines of men moving about splashing in mud and slithering in snow and filthy roads; not a light showing and none speaking above a whisper. The impression in the minds of the relief must be almost overpowering as they file along the strange paths in the darkness of a snow-laden pine wood. Having cleared our trenches successfully, we moved back three miles to the rear, and billeted, but what a march! The road was simply a black mass of mud between the white fields or the ghostly patches of wood. Often one was up to the knees, and if we had

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

fallen into some hole ploughed up by a high explosive, I'm sure we would have been drowned. But we got through, and were packed into a row of artisans' houses in a decent street. Hundreds of regiments have billeted there before us, and you should see the room in which I slept last night and am eating and resting today. Straw, sawdust, broken boxes, tins, dirt, empty demi-johns of rum, a few china ornaments and pictures, all religious; five or six officers, one sergeant-major and the mess-servant, a fire of dirty coal and men passing through to their rooms where they are packed like sardines. The kitchen which we inhabit opens directly on the street, though it is the only exit. We must have fifty or sixty men in three rooms, a cellar and a loft. We move off this afternoon to more permanent billets in the rear. There are rumours of a two days' rest and re-fit, but it is too good to believe. I'm pretty fit, though very dirty. The weather is bright and frosty today. The road is pretty hard. It ought to be a pleasant nine miles march, but I have a lot to carry.

*Saturday, 21st*

Better and better! We are ten miles from our last billets and to the rear, settled in quite a com-

## IN BILLETS

fortable house. We have re-established connections with the Company at last, and the little box of mess luxuries which we have not seen for a fortnight. Besides I am washed partially and shaved completely. But what a march it was last night. Being a clear day and well within artillery range of the enemy yesterday, we could not, I suppose, march off during the daylight. We paraded at nine and made off in file, passing on the way large bodies of French troops, who are relieving the British line up where we were. They use a great many more men than we do to perform the same work, and I'll bet they don't keep a regiment in the trenches for a fortnight at a time. It was bitterly cold last night. At the end of a ten-minute halt we were shivering, even marching hard with an occasional double to make up for ground lost by some careless fool in front — they are the curse of night marches — just kept one warm. We went the first five miles at a good rate, though when we were going through, the French with their transport coming the other way irritated us. We passed through the old historic town through which we had come a fortnight before. Many of the houses had been destroyed since we saw it last, by German shells, and I believe that even the magnificent town



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

hall at Ypres had been hit at least once. The tower and church, however, are still intact. Through the town our troubles commenced. The road was hard for men just out of long trench work. The transports of all the regiments in our division were hung up by slippery ground. The poor horses found it hard to get a footing. Carts stood all over the road, and the battalion had to dodge along, now on one side of the transport column, now on the other, while a plunging team would break it up again. Then we would halt, apparently without reason, until every one was frozen; the most irritating halt of all was that in a village which we thought was our billeting place, but it was not. I was mortally sleepy for the first part of the march, dead beat and angry for the second. I carry a lot, for my equipment is field-glasses, revolver, ammunition, haversack, water-bottle, rum-bottle, rifle, with some twenty rounds of ammunition in my pocket, a British 'warm' [greatcoat] and a German shoulder-pack round which is my Burberry and in it odds and ends, and my waterproof sheet, strapped to it a German entrenching tool. My right shoulder ached a bit. Cheer-oh! — In a few more washes I'll be clean. I hear that I have to become battalion scout-master whenever that service is



## RELIGION IN WAR

required; that means death or wounding in a shorter time than would be normal. Still it is more likely to be freer from shell fire.

### *Religion in War*

From an officer in the French army.

Hospital, December, 1914

Another thing you do not know is the marvellous awakening of Catholic faith which has uplifted France. Not only do good Catholics struggle, suffer and die in an effort to expiate, but many in whom faith was dormant have discovered that they are Christians. In the hospitals no soldiers die without the help of the Sacraments — at the front all pray.

Our clergy has been true to itself, as it has accepted without faltering its reduction to penury, as it showed an admirable fidelity to the teaching of Pius, so now upon the battlefields, in the hospitals, and invaded districts, it has displayed unequalled courage and abnegation.

In spite of the errors of official France our country is truly today the soldier of God. It wrestles against materialism and the pride of spirit for Faith and Idealism. In an invisible but certain manner it marches behind the banner of Joan of Arc. All hope after this time of trial

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

France will return to her ancient mission and according to the magnificent promise made by Pius in November, 1911, 'she will carry, as in the past, the name of God before all peoples and all kings of the earth.'

My wounds are healed. On the 15th of December I return to my Battalion. It has suffered much. Only one is left of the officers who figured in it before the war. I hope that God may spare me for my wife and children. The misery of our bodies and the anguish of our hearts invite us to seek refuge in God whose goodness pities the sufferings of poor humanity. He then makes Himself more sensibly felt, but I have not experienced the hours of exaltation you seem to suppose. Under all circumstances an act of free will is necessary to lift ourselves above matter and that act is always difficult.

He returned to the front in January and was killed on the 4th day of March, 1915.

### *Battle of the Falkland Islands*

From the Flag Lieutenant on the Invincible to his family.

December 7, 1914

I went through six hours of hell yesterday.

I'll start at the beginning. We arrived at Port

## OFF PORT STANLEY

Stanley in the Falkland Islands at eleven o'clock the day before yesterday and we all started to coal, getting stores, etc., and of course there was lots of signalling to be done and to arrange and I was busy all day till very late. At about 7.30 A.M. yesterday I was sitting in my dressing-gown and feeling very sleepy, drinking a cup of tea, when a signalman came in and reported, 'Sapper Hill reports two men-of-war approaching,' so I tore into the Admiral's cabin and told him, then flew to my cabin and got into some clothes. We had colliers alongside and steam was not up, but at least it was two hours' notice; so there was a proper bustle and scurry, and we told the colliers to shove off at once. Meanwhile on came these two, the Gneisnau and Leipzig, and then came Scharnhorst, Dresden, and Nürnberg over the horizon. They never knew the Invincible and Inflexible were anywhere but in the North Sea, and soon as they saw us they turned and ran. Well, we got out of harbour in an hour and a quarter and we went after them. We got within ten miles of them at noon, so we slowed down and let the men have some food before the fight. At a quarter to one we went on full speed; the Glasgow and our two selves, followed, about three miles astern by the Carnarvon, Cornwall, and

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Kent; the last three could not keep up. At one o'clock we opened fire slowly just trying the range, and we hit the Nürnberg or Leipzig, I don't know which it was; anyhow she steamed away and I signalled to the Kent to chase her; the Glasgow turned round too, without signal, and went after her. We were then going about twenty-six knots and closing the enemy fast. The Dresden and the Leipzig turned away, so that left the Scharnhorst and Gneisnau to fight a duel with us; after the German small cruisers left, the Scharnhorst turned and opened fire on us; so did the Gneisnau; and they shot fiendishly well. Well, we went on humming away for some time, getting closer and closer, and they were hitting us pretty badly. I thought our foremast was gone over (Admiral and I were halfway up to get a good view), one of the legs of the mast was shot away. Shell fire is unpleasant to put it mildly; exploding shells when they hit the ship are worse, as one wonders how many she will stand. The Admiral was wonderfully cool and collected, and I bobbed my head at every shell and got a stiff neck from doing it.'

Well, we turned then and they turned too, which threw their fire off, the shell hitting the ship and bursting, splinters flying and the ship

## END OF THE ACTION

catching fire here and there, and the awful din — all rather upsetting to the nerves. They turned again, so off we had to go after them and at it again. Then the Scharnhorst suddenly keeled over and went down, bows first, her engines still going, colors flying and firing. The Gneisnau hesitated, or seemed to, as she passed her flag ship. We were still shooting at them, and then she came on again, hammer and tongs, till it went on till 6 P.M. when she stopped, turned right around and ceased firing. She still had her colors flying, so we went on till I reported to the Admiral that all her men were assembling on the forecastle and she was turning over. Away she went and some three hundred men were left swimming and hanging on to the wreckage in the water, and they had all been through hell, poor devils, and it was the most awful sight I have ever seen. The water was just about freezing, and they were all calling out; one could hear them about three quarters of a mile off. We steamed up and lowered what was left of our boats and we picked up seven officers and ninety-eight men. The Inflexible picked up a lot more, but they were drowning right and left — too weak to hold on, some wounded; of course, one couldn't help being upset about it. I counted twenty-four

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

men sinking in one small patch; the water was very clear. The Glasgow and the Cornwall sank the Leipzig and the Kent sank the Nürnberg; so we had a great victory.

We were pretty badly knocked about, and you never saw such a mess of twisted iron and huge holes; and the wonderful thing, it is almost beyond belief, we hadn't one casualty. Commander Townsend was knocked down and bruised his head, but that's all. The ship will take some repairing. We were hit thirty-four times by eight-inch shells, and they do make a mess of things, I can tell you. One of the German officers is rigged out in my old blue Norfolk jacket and an old pair of flannel trousers. Fourteen of the survivors have died. We buried them at sea this morning.

This ought to get to you about January 22nd. I am going to post it at Montevideo December 28th.

*Three weeks later*

We put in at Montevideo yesterday. The Consul and Minister came off to see the Admiral on business about 10 A.M. I had to go ashore to bring them off. Every one ashore seemed pleased with us, and the tramway conductor shook me



## RECEPTION IN MONTEVIDEO

warmly by the hand and I had my photo taken twenty times, if once. Well, the Admiral and I went ashore at twelve o'clock to lunch, and once more we were snapshotted every two minutes. After lunch we went to the Embassy, and after a lot more business, we had to sit down and be photographed again. We were then taken to a big bun fight given by the English colony. They all cheered and clapped when we came in; awful crush, speeches and more photographs. I escaped at 5 P.M. A Uruguayan bloke of sorts came up and said to the Admiral: 'May I take your Flag-Lieutenant in my car and show him something of Montevideo?' So off I went. It's a fine town and he took me to a place where he said all the smart people went on Sunday. It's on the sea — a sort of summer resort, enormous houses, and lovely flowers and palms, etc. It was pelting with rain when we got there, a tropical shower, so we got an umbrella and dashed into the lounge, and to my horror the whole place was packed with people who stood up and clapped and cheered. Total defeat of yours truly! However, I did the Odol smile and bowed right and left. I cursed my host softly and told him he was a blighter. So with every one staring at me as if I were a freak, we walked across a huge ball-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

room place and out into a verandah, where there were swarms of smart-looking people, and I am bothered if the band didn't burst forth into 'God Save the King' (two verses). Then they all clapped again. It was awful! Then we sat down and drank champagne. After a bit we left and went to the Casino, where once more the band played 'God Save the King,' and I had to bow and grin like a fool; so when I came out, I said to him: 'Am I drunk, or am I the King, or what am I?' Anyhow it was time I went back to fetch the Admiral, so off we went. I got on board at 7.30. It was a funny experience.

I have some bits of shell as mementos, and my brand-new cap is full of holes. The money chests were hit by shells, so at present we have no money. We intercept the Poldon Press telegrams, so we get the war news every day.

### *From a Belgian Refugee*

Torquay, England  
December 20, 1914

It is impossible to exaggerate the horrors some of my poor countrymen have endured! Generally the best and gentlest were taken as hostages — driven into Germany or murdered. These poor



## ATROCITIES

martyrs were people beloved and respected by all — priests, doctors, professors, lawyers, rich and poor — some were thrown into their burning houses! and oh! those houses! I shall never forget them — street after street, roofless skeleton houses — brick walls crumbling over ashes! All for the sake of terrorizing the people of large cities. The Germans were told that he who *showed pity* was a traitor — so they boasted of their outrageous behavior — and officers excited them with wines *to do their worst*. Now they behave better — thanks to the Americans and their outspoken condemnation — God bless them! But when they excuse their abominations by accusing Belgian women of avenging themselves on corpses on the battlefields! you may be sure — the poor Belgian women had not the slightest chance. The Germans were everywhere in multitudes and the poor women had all they could do to get away from them. Some hid in deep wells with water to their necks. My next-door neighbor's sister, I know, was so hidden in a well for thirty-six hours! and she a rich woman! — Well, here we are, but my heart is in Belgium! We had to come, as we could no longer get our money through the banks. We think Bruxelles safe, thanks to dear Uncle Sam — and our good Amer-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

ican Minister, who will have his statue in the midst of it *before long, I hope*, as we are so *thankful* to him. He is 'légendaire' and the Belgian artists will immortalize him in their gratitude. Large cities are treated in a very different manner from the smaller towns and villages, of which there are hundreds in our densely populated land — looted, burnt, destroyed! I was among hundreds of thousands of fugitives from Antwerp when that city fell — few, if any, of the families remained together and many till this day have not heard of each other. Some are even here in Torquay — not knowing where their mothers, fathers, brothers or sisters are — and that is one of the *most painful sides* of our poor people's afflictions! Yet they are *thankful* they did their duty so handsomely, and never, never complain! It seems miraculous people can have the fortitude to be *so glad* they did the right thing, and not the dishonorable thing the Kaiser coaxed them to do and be traitors to England and France. They have the same faith as their own Catholic martyrs and their *kind, loving, generous* soul is very, very different from the Germans! Thank God! Not once since this terrible war have I indulged in a complaint — nor even a sigh for myself and never again shall I do so — after

## BELGIAN FAITH

what I have seen and know! And I hope to be worthy of all the favors I owe to kind Providence! I shall have chances enough after the war. There will be so many orphans!

1915

*Red Cross Landing at Gaba Tepe*

*April 25, 1915*

DEAR MOTHER AND DAD,

I am now seizing the first opportunity I have had of writing since last Wednesday. Since I last wrote, things have been turned inside out and there have been 'some' doings. In the first place the sections were reorganized, and my section is now in charge of Captain Downing of the Australians, and we have some Australians attached to us.

We received orders last week to pack up and stand by to move over somewhere in Turkey. We consequently did so and 'stood by' until Friday when at last the news came for us to embark. About seven in the evening we left G.H.Q. in a horse-lighter towed by a trawler, and after a somewhat uncomfortable night in it, we arrived off our landing-place at 3.30 A.M. We could hear our boys going it hammer and tongs on shore, there being an incessant rattle of rifle and machine-gun fire, punctured by an occasional shell. It was, of course, pitch dark. The lighter

## LANDING UNDER SHELL-FIRE

was run right onto the beach, and we got all our gear and the pack horses off (the horses all arrived at G.H.Q. from Alexandria during the week, by the way). About the time we were landing, the firing ceased, and as it was getting daylight we got all our gear along to the right position, and erected the station. In all, it was only about three quarters of an hour from the time we landed, until we had reported as ready for work.

About 8 A.M. the fun commenced. Lighter loads of troops began to be landed and the Turks promptly began to shell the beach and for about four hours there was a rain of shrapnel and common shell. At one time they were making a mark for a lighter that was discharging troops close to our station, and the shrapnel bullets were whizzing round us like hail. We escaped lightly I think — only one man being hit, and that was only a graze in the back. One of the Australian chaps found a bullet buried in his puttee, and I have got a very ugly-looking chunk of shell case which hit the ground about a couple of feet from where I was sitting at my engine. Whilst all this was going on, the spare men were working like niggers digging a pit to put the instruments and engine in, and I can tell you that the sound

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

of shells screaming overhead makes one hustle. As soon as we had got somewhat used to it, our other section returned, and they took over the station whilst we were busy shifting all our stores and the other gear up into the shelter of a cliff.

It was my first experience of being under fire, and I think I was too excited to notice whether I felt any funk or not. After the first shell came overhead, we soon got into the way of ducking down under the nearest bit of cover when we heard a shell coming. We had a big casualty clearing station on the beach, and the Turks started plunking explosive shells into it, although I think it was unintentional, as ammunition was being landed at the same time, and they were evidently after that. Anyway, the R.A.M.C. place was a ghastly sight. I must confess I felt inclined to be sick when I saw one poor devil who had been hit by a shell, and was practically blown to bits.

In the afternoon the battery that had been shelling us was silenced and by that time the beach was quite safe, as the enemy had been pushed back miles, and we were all busy getting stores, guns, etc., ashore. We were able to turn in and get a good night's rest.

Sunday our section did nothing. We had





THE LANDING OF THE AUSTRALIANS AND NEW-ZEALANDERS AT GABA TEPE  
IN THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN





## CHANGING POSITIONS

orders to be ready to move away and put up the other station somewhere, but as there was no sign of an immediate move, one or two of us went over to what had been the firing line of the previous day, souvenir-hunting. I managed to get some clips of Turkish cartridges and a shrapnel fuse cap. We picked them up in the Turkish trenches. After we had turned in, we were routed out to shift our position, and we are now in another sphere of the operations. We are attached to a headquarters staff right behind the firing lines, well out of harm's way, but we are in a splendid position to see what is going on. We had a rotten journey here last night, as we left our first position about 11 P.M. and we reached here at dawn and started work right away. I am feeling absolutely tired out, but my shift will soon be up, and I shall be able to turn in for a six hours' sleep. Of course we have been on bully beef and biscuits since we left G.H.Q. and I expect we shall live on that exhilarating diet until we have put the finish to Johnny Turk.

I expect our letters home will be liable to delay from here, but you mustn't get anxious on account of that. I will close now, as there is a mail going out to-night.

# LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

## *Shot Down by the Turks*

From Lady B.'s son.

The Dardanelles

May 24, 1915

Last Friday we were shot down in our machine at 3500 pts. and five miles inside the Turkish lines. Tommy pulled us up magnificently and we landed in the sea. It was a grand show on his part. I stuck in the machine and was under water about thirty seconds. On the way down I sent out the S.O.S. call on my wireless. We were seen by most of the Army and Navy and a destroyer got to us in twenty minutes; our air cushions keeping us up quite happily. We were in the water in all about two hours. The engine was hit in the pan and twisted to blazes, the rest of the machine was a wreck.

It was a marvellous escape and I only suffered the loss of my goggles. My camera was broken. When I went back to headquarters, my Major patted me on the shoulder and with tears in his eyes told me he was delighted with the way I had done my job. Quite nice! He's an old dear.

April 18, he had written describing a huge and beautiful harbor with hundreds of ships, warships, English, French and Russian, transports, thick as

## IN THE SEA OF MARMORA

flies, mine sweepers, balloon ships, aeroplane ships, supply steamers, etc., etc.

‘Strangle any one who in the future says, “And what is the Navy doing?” The organization is a marvel.’

### *A Submarine in the Sea of Marmora*

From an officer to his mother.

August, 1915

We returned safely yesterday after twenty-four days up the Dardanelles in the Sea of Marmora. It is hopeless to try and give a detailed account in a letter, but you can take it from me, it was a fine show. We broke all previous records. Our captain was absolutely splendid. The tale of our doings is the sort of thing one reads of in the old days. We went round the Sea of Marmora leaving a trail of sunk and burning ships. We fairly shook things to the core. We are the first submarine in history to bombard a place under fire. I think we were under fire about three times a day on an average, and penetrated into all sorts of places, and destroyed shipping. We even shelled a railway, and destroyed two troop trains. We shelled the embankment and blocked the line, and then caught the trains as they came along. It was the funniest thing you can imagine to see the trains try to hide behind trees, but we

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

caught them and smashed them all to blazes. Three ammunition wagons blew up with a terrific explosion. The soldiers, of course, got out, and took cover, and fired tons of ammunition at us, but we were out of range. Altogether we sunk one gunboat, five steamers — one of three thousand tons — seventeen large sailing ships, two trains, one railway embankment, and a few villagers, who fired on us, and got it in the neck for doing so. We also dived up to Constantinople and fired a torpedo at the wharf at the arsenal, where there were a lot of ammunition lighters, and there was a most terrific explosion which shook the boat, although we were one and a quarter miles away. What happened I don't know, but something must have got it in the neck judging by the bang. We had a duel with a small gunboat one day on the surface, and drove her off, although she fired two hundred rounds from her two guns. After that we were left alone, and everything ran like blazes when we got anywhere near. The only drawback was that we all had dysentery and the second officer and a seaman got badly burned setting fire to a steamer, so the chief officer and I had to keep watch all the time, and by the time the twenty-four days were gone, we were absolutely done

## OVATION AT THE BASE

up. What the officer went through with his burned feet down below, I don't know. We had no trouble diving in the Sea of Marmora, but when we came down, we had an awful time, as the Turks had rigged up all sorts of nets and things to catch us, and we got mixed up in them and also got fouled by mines three times.

The reception we got in harbour was great. The whole fleet manned the rails and cheered us madly. Just imagine us, all dirty and unshaven, and the flag with bullet holes all over it, and the conning tower all dents from bullets, and rusty — steaming through the lines, and thousands of men cheering like mad — battleships, cruisers, torpedo boats, transports, and the Captains leading the cheers. It was great. I have heard cheers before, but this was the real thing. Poor old Cochrane's eyes were full of tears as he saluted to cries of 'Are we downhearted?' and 'Well done, E.7.'

At present I am resting, and on land and basking in the light of popular favour. It is very nice to be a hero among one's own cloth you know, because they really mean it and they really understand.

The writer was transferred to another submarine and killed the following week.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

*In the Trenches at Suwla Bay*

From Captain Draper, British officer.

18 August, 1915

DEAREST FATHER:

Thank you a thousand times for your first parcel. It arrived this morning and could not have been more welcome. We have been living on nothing but bully beef and biscuits for over ten days now, and are sick of it.

I wonder how much you will have seen of our doings in the papers; not much, probably, but enough to have a better idea of how the whole thing is succeeding than any of us here have. I cannot tell you much, except that a great deal of it has been pure hell, and apart from the censor, I doubt if I shall ever want to talk much about it.

Our Brigade has been right in the thick of it, and though I missed the first ten days, I came in for the worst we suffered, and have been at it ever since. We have lost very heavily in officers as a Brigade, though the York and Lancasters were luckier than most. The Colonel and Adjutant are still here, and about ten others of us — mostly juniors. However, other regiments having lost so much, they have had to equalize those



## AT SUVLA BAY

that are still whole, and I am now transferred from my own regiment, and acting as second in command to a battalion, which you can imagine is anxiety enough in itself. However, they are topping people, the few officers there are here, and it is enormously interesting seeing so much of the running of a show. One always wants caution, of course, but here the primary and absolute essential is push, *push* as quick as possible, and without that we cannot succeed.

The first thing that I got in for was part of the original attack, but it is useless to describe it, or one's feelings. You will wonder if I felt 'frightened,' and I can quite easily say, no. There is far too much to do, somehow, and one never thinks of it. The whole thing is a *very* great nervous strain, aggravated by lack of sleep, and personally the only kind of funk I feel is mental rather than physical, and that only occasionally. The worst place I have had to deal with yet is a big, open, dried-up salt lake, all white, and with not a vestige of water on it. It is about three quarters of a mile wide, and one has to cross it, probably about twice a week. It is swept by shrapnel continuously, and one can only plod very slowly across it, as the mud is about a foot deep, and when you are all as heavily equipped as we are,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

you can guess what that means! It takes about half an hour to get across and every time one takes one's people over, there are casualties. The only way is to steel oneself to it, and walk across as light-heartedly as possible, cheering up the men. But it is bitter work and no one enjoys it.

We have been in this trench now for a week; and are to be relieved tonight. We have had a lighter time, and nothing but a few casualties from shrapnel and snipers. My section is about one hundred and thirty yards long, easily, and with thick scrub along most of the front of it. It is all right by day, but beastly by night, as the men get jumpy having the brush so near them, and one has to be cheering and steadying them the whole time. I have had on an average one and a half hours' sleep per night, for the last week, and possibly one odd hour or two by day, and that is all. One cannot keep it up indefinitely.

The Turkish snipers have a ruse they work on us almost every night. Five or six of them come quite close up to our trench, say thirty yards, at any hour during the night, shout out something in Turkish, so that we shall hear, and then fire thirty or forty rounds. If the sentry who is nearest has good nerves, nothing happens, and he simply keeps his head down, till it stops. But



## A DIFFICULT COUNTRY

if he is a fool, he starts opening fire, and that starts the next man, and in a minute or two you have the whole firing line letting off rapid fire, and bullets flying in all directions, which is just what the Turks want, as it gives away our position. I have stopped it fairly well now, in my section, by laughing at it, but one always has the haunting doubt that it may, after all, be the real attack coming, and that increases the strain.

It is very difficult country to fight over, all prickly scrub, rock and pitiless gorges, and if we had held it, it would be impregnable. But we are pushing on all right, I think, and if only General Headquarters are rigorous enough, we ought to be able to pull it off in time. Discomforts are chiefly flies, lack of water, and lack of sleep. I have not had a wash now for over a week, nor my boots off once, and a fine beard is growing. However, all that is nothing, and one is thankful to be alive and well, when so many fine people are gone. The casualties are *hateful*, and some of the sufferings we have seen our own wounded going through, and been powerless to help, make one mad to think back on. But, after a time, one has not the courage to look backward or forward. All one can do is to go right and steadily ahead, and one *can* keep perfectly steady if one does not

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

think. In a way, it is the best worth-living-through thing I have ever done, but you can imagine how much steeling up it means for me to say that. I am quite confident I shall come through, so much depends on taking care and being vigilant; but you cannot imagine how easy it is to get careless after a few days. But I have my wife to do it for, so it is easy. I must stop. Sorry.

The writer was killed on August 21, 1915.

### *The Evacuation of Anzac, December 18-19*

From a wounded officer in Egypt.

*January, 1916*

I wonder have you heard the story of the two Turkish deserters — a most dramatic incident in that wonderful accomplishment, the evacuation of Anzac. The evacuation was actually achieved without the Turks in their trenches knowing what was toward! The two things which completely bamboozled them were: (1) the flashes of our rifles from abandoned trenches, and this was done by means of time fuses; (2) the landing every day in broad daylight during the whole week previous to evacuation of a force of two thousand men. This gave the Turks the impres-

## ABANDONED TRENCHES

sion that a big offensive was being prepared and that nothing was farther from our thoughts than evacuation. Even as Penelope, the men landed each day were reëmbarked each night under cover of darkness, together with a vast lot more. It all worked like a charm.

But now for the tale of the deserters. The night that we had evacuated the trenches and the Australians had withdrawn to the beach to embark — with very mixed feelings, poor fellows — and at a moment when the entire success of the movement and the safety of the army depended upon secrecy, lo! two Turkish deserters crossed over to our lines to surrender. To their amazement they found our trenches unoccupied. What must have been their feelings! Had they returned and told their tale, would they not have been made Field Marshals on the spot? Instead they wandered on and on, down seemingly endless communication trenches, until finally they reached the beach, in time to find the very last of the Australians embarking from the pier. The two Turks gave themselves up and have seen the last, as we have, of that ghastly Peninsula.

At the time of the great blizzard hundreds of men died from exposure, frost and drowning. One officer, a very powerful man, describes to me how

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

his roofless dugout at his 'rest camp' was flooded eighteen inches and he attributes his escape from frost bite to the fact that he was obliged to walk up and down his trench the entire night. Did Dante, in his *Inferno*, picture a scene of greater horror and suffering. The poor fellows at Helles have suffered there beyond all power of description.

### *A United Ireland*

From the sister of a girl in service in Boston.

Ballashannon, County Donegal  
Ulster, *January 6, 1915*

MY DEAR SISTER,

Duty compels me, if not affection, to answer your ever fond letter of December 23! Oh, sister dear, my heart is breaking to have to tell you of the ravage the war is making here. Tonight we have just heard of two young men who volunteered and who have been fighting for four months and both fell at the siege of Antwerp, but, thank God, they fell in a noble cause, fighting for what is most dear to all of us, even dearer than life — that's their country.

Dear sister, a few short words on Ulster and the situation there: Thank God for being able to say we have 52,000 brave young soldiers of every

## ULSTER IN THE WAR

denomination, fighting side by side for their country. Indeed, it gives me great pleasure to write this news, despite all our woe. Oh, sister dear, just think that eight months ago today we expected a civil war in Ulster. Oh, what a change! To think all these men were on the verge of war against each other, and today, fighting side by side in a glorious struggle for their country!

Indeed, it is a different Ulster to eight months ago. As the Prophet of old said: 'The palm branches are waving from every hilltop, peaceful signs to each other,' where so short a time ago the roll of the cannon and the whistling of the bullets and the valleys full of dead were expected. Thank God, all is changed! .

I hope you keep a close eye on the papers and see how many of our fine Irishmen are fighting at the front. A great many have been decorated for their bravery by His Majesty, King George, and personal notes have come to lots of poor mothers from Queen Mary's own hand.

Thank God, once again, Ireland and England are united in fighting this great battle. It is the dearest wish of every Irish heart that England should win. Fighting for one, means fighting for all.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Our friend and leader, Mr. Redmond, has delegates all over, helping with the recruiting, so we are misjudged, if people say this war is of no interest to us. Indeed, if my dear ones are needed, I won't rebel, but I will help with all my heart, and with the all-powerful hand of the Almighty God, our brave army will crush the foe for ever and ever.

### *Countess Martinengo on the Situation of Italy*

From the Countess Cesaresco Martinengo, Salo Lago di Garda, Italy, to Mr. William Roscoe Thayer.

*February, 1915*

... I think out of Italy the military side of the question has been overlooked. To have gone to war with the army so unready as it was last autumn would have been folly — but this was not desirable to say abroad; at least, not till it was remedied. The army is believed now to be ready, but the whole of what would be the theatre of war is still a chaos of deep snow. What the troops would have suffered is shown by what they have suffered in their work of mercy in the Abruzzi.

Every advantage in the *ground* is on the side of

## WAR SENTIMENT IN ITALY

Austria — the approaches which were almost *open* in 1866 — are now fortified (as I have seen myself in frequent journeys) in a way which, added to the natural configuration, makes advance from this side impossible nearly everywhere. Colonel Barone, the military writer, says the Friuli are the only mode of approach from Italy.

All this makes a war a serious business and not the affair of a 'light heart.' Especially as the war would be a very grave matter for Italy, *in more ways than one*, unless it were a rapid and unquestionable *success*. The apprehension that it might be quite the reverse makes many Italians, who abhor the Germans and all their works, against war — I should say in Italy ninety-five per cent, or *more*, are anti-Hun — but that the whole country is longing for war, I doubt. However, if it came, every one would go along with it (including the Clericals, of whom all the younger ones are fervid interventionists), except the majority of the Socialists.

Sentiment about Trento and Trieste is less strong than probably you suppose, because many people *privately* doubt if the mass of the Trentini, who are *very Clerical*, want to join the Regno — the Triestini *were* more for Italian citizenship;



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

but there is some doubt if they are by any means all now desirous of running the risk of Trieste becoming a port of no importance. I speak of the Italians, for the Slavs are certainly contrary. Tommasseo said in 1852 — that the Italians showed such *contempt* for the Slavs that they would never be able to govern them.

I think, however, that the 'logic of race' would carry with it the Italian part of the population in both provinces if Italy arrived as a triumphant liberator.

Personally I have always been 'Irredentist,' and am now, and I do not myself see the way out of the present situation without war, but I can understand the force of 'neutralist' arguments. The *atrocious military frontier* of Italy is, of course, a reason to get a better one, if you can.

Meanwhile, I rejoice that America is *true*. Mrs. Thayer and Margaret will have an enchanting journey South. Will your new book match 'Cavour'? It cannot do more! Our most cordial greetings.

Yours very sincerely

E. MARTINENGO



# GERMAN MARKSMANSHIP

## *The Blücher Sunk*

From an American living in London.

March 11, 1915

At dinner the other night I met an eye-witness of the North Sea fight in which the Blücher was sunk, who told me such an interesting story that I think it and the subject will bear repetition. He was in command of one of the new thirty-knot destroyers, and at three o'clock in the morning, having just come into the Isle of Wight from a week at sea, was in the act of stepping into a hot bath, when an order came for his ship to proceed at full speed to a certain rendezvous. He left his bath and went on to the bridge, where he remained all night, driving at twenty-one knots through a heavy head wind and sea. Just at daylight they came up with the English fleet and almost immediately sighted the Germans and gave chase. The Lion and the Tiger gained steadily on the Germans and both sides opened fire at about ten miles' range. The German shooting was miraculous; salvo after salvo landing like one shot within a few yards of the big British ships, throwing up spouts of water a hundred yards high. The calibration of the German naval guns is apparently much more accurate than the Eng-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

lish. By calibration is meant the adjustment of the sights on each gun, which is done with the object of causing all the shells from a broadside to land as nearly as possible in the same place. The English think their calibration good if the different shots land within one hundred yards of each other, but the Germans literally make all the projectiles of a salvo land in a place as big as an ordinary room. If one of these well-calibrated German broadsides had landed square on the *Lion* or the *Tiger*, it would have cut her in half, but fortunately, they all just missed, though the man on the bridge of the destroyer said his heart was in his mouth the whole time at the narrowness of the misses. The English shooting, though collectively not as good, was individually better, and the German ships were hit repeatedly. Quite early in the action, however, the *Lion* was hit by one of the shells from a salvo, all of which landed within a foot of her, deluging her with water. It was a lucky shot, as it struck her feed tank, which put half her engines out of commission. This was the only time she was hit. The *Tiger* was hit three times by glancing shots and sustained practically no damage. The *Blücher* was, of course, sunk, and my friend's destroyer picked up thirty men, among whom were several minor

## A PARTING SHOT

officers. He said the men were a fine lot, but the officers were second-rate and disagreeable. Both men and officers frankly stated that, had an English ship been sunk, they had orders not to rescue a man. All the time the rescue work went on, a German aeroplane circled above and dropped bombs, though none took effect. They saw a Zeppelin, but it did not come near, immediately retreating when fired on. Just as our destroyer had finished her work, a twelve-inch shell, one of the last shots the enemy fired, landed right in the engine room. She only just kept afloat and was towed back. Fortunately, only three or four men were injured. This man said that the Germans were doubtless under orders to run, but that by all the laws of modern sea-fighting, they should have turned and fought after the Lion was hit and had to drop out. The German fleet was from then on the stronger of the two and he said, in his opinion, would have been able to defeat the British squadron. I asked him whether the Germans were badly hammered and he said it was impossible to tell with any accuracy. Two of their big ships were afire, but this might have been caused by the powder with which the deck guns are served and which apparently lies around loose and when ignited gives the effect of a con-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

flagration, though in reality of no importance or danger. He had heard the Admiralty's private advices were that the big ships were pretty badly damaged and he knew they had been hit repeatedly, because he saw it. The one thing he did definitely confirm was that the British ships got off very lightly, principally through luck in that the German shooting just missed its mark. May they continue to just miss their mark in every way, which is really what they have done both by land and sea so far.

### *Nets in St. George's Channel*

March 25, 1915

I hear, from a source the accuracy of which I do not doubt, that the submarine menace is being actively combated with nets. One net actually is stretched across the Straits of Dover (twenty-four miles) buoyed up at intervals by fishing smacks, while another is being put across St. George's Channel, the narrow northern opening to the Irish Sea. From what my informants told me, there is little doubt but that several submarines have been caught, although one broke through and got away. The nets choke the propellers like eel grass and get so tangled up in the steering gear that the submarine is either igno-

## BUILDING A MEDICAL CENTRE

miniously hauled to the surface or remains below immovable, where the crew must eventually perish like rats in a trap. Of course, much of this may have already appeared in your papers, but is practically unknown here. Some friends of ours have supplied microphones (mechanical ears for use under water) to the Admiralty, which have actually been successful in locating the exact spot where submarines were entangled. They catch the pulse of the propeller as the boat struggles to extricate itself.

### *Building a Medical Centre*

From Madame Depage's son of twenty.

*March, 1915*

DEAR LITTLE MAMA,

La Panne has certainly changed a great deal in the last few weeks. One might imagine oneself at the eve of the opening of an exposition, or even the day itself, seeing we are in Belgium!

Truly the medical career is full of surprises. I wonder if the little urchin who used to poach in the forest of Sorgues ever imagined even in dreams that he would some day be not only a great doctor, but a great builder and of high rank in the Belgian army. When one sees him

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

walking about with his hands in his pockets amid the scaffoldings, he looks like an engineer or a contractor inspecting his workmen. The dunes are disappearing under one's very eyes and the buildings are springing up like mushrooms. We have a factory of instruments, a bathing establishment (six hundred baths a day), and we are hoping for a steam laundry; in fact, a regular medical town, the starting point of other units. Will La Panne ever be a second Rochester?

Life certainly is a strange thing, beloved Mama; I believe it may be very fine when one knows how to take it, or else very sad; that depends. As to the war, the wounded who are brought to us bring us back to the reality and take away the illusion of a holiday at the seashore. The weather is so beautiful since the first day of spring that one wonders at not seeing gaudy parasols and elegant silhouettes of young women walking about on the sands; or merry bands of children disporting themselves and building great forts, only to be knocked down by the incoming tide. Alas! are we not all of us Belgians big children fighting against the invading tide? Our forts have scarcely resisted any better. But I think the tide is high now and must soon go down.



# DAYS OF ANGUISH

## *An English Mother*

From an English lady.

London, *March 29, 1915*

In your wildest dreams you could not imagine what we are going through on this side. Try and think of the most awful thing you could imagine — and it is *ten* times more awful than that. We have given of our best and dearest. Their blood has been poured out like water — and proud as we are of them, and of the undying glory which surrounds their names, it does not prevent our hearts being broken with a grief that defies consolation. Just to show you, I enclose *one day's* list, cut at random from a daily paper — notice the ages of the men I have marked and the extraordinary preponderance of '*only*' sons. Many families we know have each lost *two* sons. Think what it means — the sorrow — and the despair — of the desolate homes!

I *can't* describe it. We are fighting for our lives and for our very existence. We pray — and hope and believe that ultimate Victory will be ours — but the end is not yet in sight. Speaking for ourselves as a family — we are never free from agonizing anxiety about our dear ones. We never know what a day may bring forth. My

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

sailor son has the command of a ship and has been fighting in the Persian Gulf — his ship was much damaged by shells, so he had to go to Bombay for repairs, but is back in the Gulf by this time — but more anxious are we about our darling, most precious grandson, aged eighteen and a half. He is now in *the trenches*, with his regiment; the Gordon Highlanders. He is the handsomest boy I ever saw — and just as good and clever as he is beautiful. He writes wonderful letters to his mother. He was one of the first to volunteer. There was no holding him. He went straight from the Public School (Winchester) instead of going to Oxford University. His poor mother (my daughter) is a widow. She sets us all an example of unflinching bravery and never gives way at all. But when I think of him — at night ——

Besides these two dear ones, we have eight nephews on the war-path. Two have been home wounded — mercifully recovering. I feel sometimes as though there would be no one left. Who will our girls marry? All our young men have gone. Last Friday I went to the wedding of such a pretty girl. I have known her all her life. She has married a young officer of the 17th Lancers. He came home last Monday — married her



## THE ROLL OF HONOUR

Friday — they went to Folkestone that afternoon — and from there, he crossed back to France yesterday, on his way to the front, after just about forty-eight hours of married life! — and that case is only one of many.

This last battle of 'Neuve Chapelle' has been one of awful slaughter. We have gained about a mile of ground and we have lost about eight hundred officers killed and wounded and thousands of men. Do you wonder that we open our papers in the mornings, with trembling hands and quaking hearts, and cannot read 'The Roll of Honour' without blinding tears? You would not know this dear old London. The streets are full of men in khaki — yes, and the 'Busses' and Trams and Tubes too — they are everywhere. We are pouring men into France, but we still want *guns*, and it is a terrible problem how to keep up the supply of ammunition. The Russians are doing splendidly and now public interest is centred in the Dardanelles. If we could make real progress there, it would mean so much to us and to our Allies.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

### *The Second Battle of Ypres — Gas Attack*

From an American living in London.

*April 22, 1915*

The whole attack at Ypres on April 22 was a complete surprise. The Canadians were on the end of the English line and next them was a small section of French troops. On the other side of the French troops came the Belgians. The German information must have been good, for it was at this small line of French troops that they directed their attack. It so happened they were Territorials, most of them men of a certain age. When the gas came rolling down on them, one whiff was enough, and those who could still run got up and galloped, the reports say, for five miles. Taking the French temperament into consideration, the Germans chose their point of attack well, but it would probably have been pretty successful against any of the Allies, as the gas unquestionably does deadly work. But, if only English troops had been there, we feel they might have fallen back, contesting every inch of the ground, instead of opening up a gap like a breach in a Mississippi dyke. The Germans came pouring through and the Canadian line was left in the air. I have talked with a Canadian General since

## FIGHTING BACK TO BACK

and he told me they were literally fighting back to back. The Germans came round behind them and by all the rules of war they should have been exterminated. After fighting out of both sides of their trenches in this way for hours, they were so far from being exterminated that they got out in a body, went for the Germans in their rear, and, in spite of the fact that every other man went down, they kept on until they had either killed or taken prisoner all the Germans who had got behind them. In doing this, they did not break their line once, but swung it back until it made a junction with the English troops who had been thrown into the gap. They retook the French guns which had been supporting them before the attack and which the Germans had captured. It was a magnificent piece of work, as the Canadians are comparatively untrained and only kept their positions by coolness and the most steadfast bravery. The officers were extraordinary and are reported by eye-witnesses to have led their men like veterans. It is a performance which should thrill every American, as these Canadians are really our people and their army is the twin of what ours would be. They undoubtedly saved the situation, as every man in the street here will tell you, but the cost was terrific. I have it on the

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

best authority that of twelve thousand Canadians engaged, there were six thousand casualties.

A father, whose only son is at the front, wrote to me shortly after this battle: 'All Canada is mourning her brave boys today; but we feel the flags should be hoisted to the peak and not half-masted for them!'

### *The Second Battle of Ypres — Gas at Hill 60*

*April 28, 1915*

Since I last wrote we have got busy here, and have been fighting more or less continuously for the last ten days, and pretty desperate fighting too. It began on Saturday evening the 17th and Hill 60, about which you have read, was the objective. It is a small hill about three or four miles south of Ypres. We had been mining there in three or four places for weeks past and got well under them. They were countermining and it was a toss-up which loosed off first. We had six mines, with 2700 pounds of powder in each. We loosed them off at 7 P.M., which gave us an hour of daylight to get the hang of the ground for digging in during the night. As we expected, there was no difficulty in taking the hill. The West Kents

## ATTACK ON HILL 60

and K.O.S.B. rushed it when the mines went off, and secured the position, blockading approaches, and starting to dig in. Of course, we covered them well by artillery fire, and all went well. By eight o'clock, however, fire became pretty hot, as the hill is a regular shell trap and the Germans let us know it.

For two days they counter-attacked. On Tuesday they had guns on the hill from seventy-four different places, including two batteries of field guns at point blank range three hundred yards off. The bombardment was appalling, all into a confined space of two hundred yards square or little more. Our parapets and trenches were knocked to shivers. At 6 P.M. it looked as if not a soul could live, the whole hill being out of sight in dust, smoke, and flame. There was a rumour that we had evacuated the trenches on the left of the hill, and I got a telephone message through to the East Surreys, to ask if this was so. (My orders had been that the hill was to be held at all cost.) The answer came back: 'We have not given up a single inch, and we have not the slightest intention of doing so.' About seven the bombardment stopped and the Germans came on with bombs, etc. There was desperate hand-to-hand fighting all through the night. It never stopped,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

but in the morning those gallant fellows were there all right, and gradually the Germans chucked it and left us the hill. Of course, it was a perfect shambles. The big mine craters were chock full of dead and wounded, into which the big shells kept plunging. You can imagine the scenes — or rather it is too ghastly to think about. And all the old dead French and German from last year's fighting were being thrown up too. We have held the hill ever since, but we shall have a lot of fighting there yet. We lost eighty-four officers and twenty-two hundred men, but, by Jove, it was worth it as an example of real pluck and tenacity, and increased the morale of our men fifty per cent. One was always wondering whether all these new drafts that we have been filling up with would fight as well as the old lot, and now we know that the old spirit is as good as ever. I am told that the men were wonderful. At the very worst time they were only praying that the Germans would come on and give them a chance; there was no idea of giving way, though the hell they went through for twelve hours was enough to break down anything. And mind, these fellows had only to go back to their old trenches, one hundred yards down the hill, to be comparatively safe. And



## GAS

there were few officers left, and they, of course, could not move about. The men stuck it out by themselves, and there has been no finer example of discipline and devotion in the war. The episode is a mere nothing, only an incident; but those six or seven regiments never will do anything finer. I *am* proud of them.

So much for Hill 60. That fight finished more or less on Wednesday morning. At 5 P.M. that night on the north side of the Ypres salient, the Germans suddenly opened pipes which let loose dense clouds of chlorine, a heavy asphyxiating gas, which the wind carried over the trenches of the French on our left and suffocated them. It produced violent sickness and in many cases total asphyxiation, besides blinding effects. A panic ensued and the French fell back, exposing the whole of our left, into which the Germans swarmed. The Canadians on our extreme left behaved splendidly, and though obliged to throw back their left fought like demons. The line was completely broken, as the French went back to the Canal north of Ypres. We filled up the gap as best we could and there was most desperate fighting and it has continued ever since.

The Germans are very strong in guns and have some real whoppers in action — forty-two centi-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

metre Austrian guns (seventeen-inch). We got the base of one of these shells next day. It weighed eighty-four pounds and was picked up seven hundred yards from where the shell burst.

This use of gas is a low trick of the Germans, and they have beat us back over and over again with it. The wind sticks in the northeast, so they have the bulge over us. We wear pads of gauze now, damped with some mixture to counteract it; but it is very strong stuff, bleaches the grass, and hangs about for hours, being very heavy. It smells like ether, and makes your eyes, nose and mucous membranes generally, run till you are blinded. Several men have died of it, and it has affected men three and four miles away with headache and sickness and sore eyes. They are also firing shells filled with some even worse compound which we haven't analyzed yet, but it is absolutely poisonous.

It is just as well that we should all realize what we are up against — an enemy who will stick at *nothing*. No Geneva Convention, or treaty, or word of honour weighs with him for a moment. He says that the use of gas is more humane than shells and high explosives, etc. That is not the point. Shells, etc., are recognized; the poisoning of air or water by asphyxiating gas, etc., is ex-



## A DEAD BROTHER

pressly forbidden and he signed the agreement to that effect, and now ignores it. The point is, are nations to keep their word or not? Nations, like individuals, must have a code of honour, or society would be impossible, and we should become no better than savages or brute beasts. The whole basis of civilization is gone, if treaties, agreements and conventions are not recognized. That is what we are up against, and that is what we are fighting for. We put our name to an agreement and we are keeping our word. Germany is doing the opposite.

### *A Dead Brother*

From an English girl.

London, *April*, 1915

We are all heartbroken at losing my little brother, but one cannot grudge him to the country and I am proud to say he was mentioned in the despatches. He at one time saved his whole regiment from being destroyed by galloping under fire to warn them of an unknown German ambush. So one can't wish it otherwise.

The whole country is determined to fight like bull-dogs till the Allies really win in good earnest.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

### *A Night Attack*

Private Robert McGregor, of the Gordon Highlanders, writes to his father of a night attack in the trenches. An aeroplane came over them.

1915

Then — a searchlight played on us, followed by the dropping of bright balls which brilliantly lit up the whole place and in a few minutes the shells got us and were coming plump into us. One shell came into our position and knocked over twelve of our fellows! They were practically torn asunder and the whole side of the trench was torn up too. Our guns were blazing away and I think found the fellows who were annoying us, as their fire got slacker, and finally ceased. This sort of thing was kept up till day dawned.

Then we saw the Huns advancing, as unconcerned as if on parade. On they came, in close formation, and there must have been ten to one against us. We fired as hard as we could, but they seemed to come out of nowhere, and never halted. When they were getting too close, we charged. It was our only chance. When they saw us leave the trenches, they halted for a moment, but afterwards came on to meet us. I don't remember much of what took place then. It was stab and hack. You could hear the smash of gun

## THE IRISH TO THE RESCUE

against gun, the thud-thud, but beyond that there was an uncanny silence, broken sometimes by an oath — or by a groan. How long this went on I hardly know (but it seemed years to me). We drove them back about a hundred yards. Then our officers saw the Germans reinforced and sounded a retreat, but owing to a few machine guns we couldn't get back into our trenches, and the Germans, now greatly increased, came on again and our fellows, only about one hundred and seventy left, got ready to meet what seemed certain death.

But just at that moment, we heard the sound of singing, and the song was 'God save Ireland.' Well, Father, I have seen some reckless Irishmen in my time, but nothing to match the recklessness and daring of those gallant Irishmen! They took the Germans on the left flank.

The Germans probably now numbered about two thousand, against about one hundred and seventy of us; but had there been fifty thousand Germans I don't believe in my soul they could have stood before those Irish! They were simply irresistible; and all the time kept on singing 'God save Ireland.'

One huge red-haired son of Erin, having broken his rifle, got possession of a German officer's

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

sword, and everything that came in the way of this giant, went down!

Four hundred and seventy Huns were killed and wounded, and we took seventy prisoners. And, Father, had it not been for the Irish I wouldn't have been writing this. I tell you, when it comes to a hand-to-hand job, there is nothing in the whole British army to approach them! 'God Save Ireland!!!'

### *On Board the Lusitania*

The writer was Miss Theodate Pope, passenger on the Lusitania, which was torpedoed on May 7, 1915.

Hôtel de Crillon  
Paris, France  
June 28, 1915

I am going to try to tell you about the Lusitania.

When we pulled out of dock, I was in the writing-room and saw then for the first time, in the morning 'Sun,' the German threat. I said to Mr. Friend, 'That means, of course, that they intend to get us,' though the name of the ship was not given. We were a very quiet shipload of passengers.

Early Thursday morning, the day before the

## THE TORPEDO STRIKES

disaster, I was awakened by shouts and the scuffling of feet. I looked out of my porthole and watched the crew loosening the ship's boats and swinging them clear of the railing.

Friday morning we came slowly through fog, blowing our fog horn. It cleared off about an hour before we went below for lunch. A young Englishman at our table had been served with his ice cream, and was waiting for the steward to bring him a spoon to eat it with. He looked ruefully at it and said he would hate to have a torpedo get him before he ate it. We all laughed, and then commented on how slowly we were running. We thought the engines had stopped.

Mr. Friend and I went up on deck B on the starboard side and leaned over the railing, looking at the sea, which was a marvellous blue and very dazzling in the sunlight. I said, 'How could the officers ever see a periscope there?' The torpedo was on its way to us at that moment, for we went a short distance farther toward the stern, turning the corner by the smoking-room, when the ship was struck on the starboard side. The sound was like that of an arrow entering the canvas and straw of a target, magnified a thousand times, and I imagined I heard a dull explosion follow. The water and timbers flew past

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

the deck. Mr. Friend struck his fist in his hand and said, 'By Jove! they've got us.' The ship steadied herself a few seconds and then listed heavily to starboard, throwing us against the wall of a small corridor we had quickly turned into.

We then started up to the boat deck, as I had told Mr. Friend and poor Robinson that, in case of trouble, we would meet there, and not try to run around the ship to find one another. That deck suddenly looked very strange, crowded with people, and I remember that two women were crying in a pitifully weak way. An officer was shouting orders to stop lowering the boats, and we were told to go down to deck B. We first looked over the rail and watched a boat filled with men and women being lowered. The stern was lowered too quickly and half the boatload were spilled backwards into the water. We looked at each other, sickened by the sight, and then made our way through the crowd for deck B on the starboard side. There we saw boats being lowered safely from above. The ship was sinking so quickly we feared she would fall on and capsize the small boats, and it seemed not a good place to jump from for the same reason. We turned to make our way up again through the crush of people coming and going.

## DOWN BY THE BOW

We passed Mme. Depage; her eyes were wide and startled, but brave. She had a man on either side of her, friends of hers, so I did not speak. It was no time for words unless one could offer help.

On the port side of deck A again we saw more boats safely lowered, and Mr. Friend wished me to join the throng of men and women crowding into one. He would not take a place in one as long as there were still women aboard; and as I would not leave him, we pushed our way towards the stern, which was now uphill work, as the bow was sinking so rapidly. Robinson appeared on my right. I could only put my hand on her shoulder and say, 'Oh, Robinson!' Her habitual smile appeared to be frozen on her face. Mr. Friend said, 'Life belts!' and I went with him into near-by cabins, where he found three. He tied them on us in hard knots and we stood by the ropes on the outer side of the deck, in the place which one of the boats had occupied. We looked up at the funnels. We could see the ship move, she was going so rapidly. I glanced at Mr. Friend. He was standing very straight, and I thought to myself, 'The son of a soldier.' We turned and looked down the side of the ship. We could now see the grey hull and knew it was



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

time to jump. I asked him to go first. He stepped over the ropes, slipped down one of the uprights, and reached, I think, the rail of deck B, and then jumped. Robinson and I watched for him to come up, which he did in a few seconds, and he looked up at us to encourage us. I said, 'Come, Robinson,' and I stepped over the ropes as he had, slipped a short distance, found a foothold on a roll of the canvas, used as deck shields, and then jumped.

I do not know whether Robinson followed me.

The next thing I realized was that I could not reach the surface because I was being washed and whirled up against wood. I was swallowing and breathing the salt water, but felt no special discomfort nor anguish of mind — was strangely apathetic. I opened my eyes, and through the green water I could see what I was being dashed up against. It was the under part of a deck. I could see the matched boarding and the angle iron, over the railing. I had been swept between decks. I closed my eyes and thought, 'This is of course the end of life for me,' and then I thought of you. I was glad I had made another will, and I counted the buildings I had designed — the ones built and building — and hoped I had 'made good.' Quietly I thought of the friends





THE LAST OF THE LUSITANIA



## IN THE WATER

I love, and then committed myself to God's care in thought — a prayer without words. I must then have received the blow on the top of my head which made me unconscious. My stiff straw hat and my hair probably saved me from being killed by it. Then for perhaps half a minute I opened my eyes on a grey world. I could not see the sunlight because of the blow on my head. I was surrounded and jostled by hundreds of frantic, screaming, shouting humans in this grey and watery inferno. The ship must just have gone down.

A man insane with fright was clinging to my shoulders. I can see the panic in his eyes as he looked over my head. He had no life belt on, and his weight was pulling me under again. Had I struggled against him, he would probably have clung to me, but I never even felt the inclination to; I said, 'Oh, please don't,' and then the water closed over me and I became unconscious again. He must have left me when he found me sinking under him.

I opened my eyes later on the brilliant sunlight and blue sea. I was floating on my back. The men and women were floating with wider spaces between them. A man on my right had a gash on his forehead, the back of a woman's head was

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

near me. I saw an old man at my left, upright in the water, and as he could see the horizon, I asked him if he saw any rescue ships coming. He did not. An Italian with his arms around a small tin tank as a float was chanting. There were occasional shouts; I could see the crowded ship's boats far away. I wondered where Mr. Friend was. I noticed the water felt warm, and saw an oar. I reached for it and pushed one end of it toward the old man on my left, and then, as my heavy wet clothes kept dragging me down, I lifted my right foot over the blade of the oar and held it with my left hand. This helped to save me. I tried to lift my head a little to see for myself if there was not some aid coming. Then I sank back, very relieved in my mind, for I decided it was too horrible to be true and that I was dreaming, and again lost consciousness. This was about three o'clock.

The next thing I was aware of was looking into a small, open grate fire. (This was half-past ten at night and I was in the captain's cabin on the rescue ship *Julia*.) I decided that the opening of the grate measured about  $18 \times 24$  inches. I did not remember the shipwreck. I saw a pair of grey trousered legs by the fireplace, and turning my head saw a man, leaning over a table looking

## CONSCIOUSNESS

at me where I lay wrapped in a blanket on the floor. I heard him say, 'She's conscious,' and two women came up to me and patted me and told me the doctor was coming. I thought they looked alike and asked them if they were sisters and what their names were. When I tried to talk I found that I was shaking from head to foot in a violent chill, though there were hot stones at my feet and back. A doctor came and picked me up, calling two sailors, who made a chair with their hands and lifted me. I was too stupid to hold on to them and fell back, but the doctor caught me by the shoulders and I was carried off the ship and through the crowds on the dock, the sailors shouting, 'Way! Way!' They lifted me into a motor, and in a few moments we stopped at what proved to be a third-rate hotel.

I told the doctor I could step out of the car myself, but in trying to, I crumpled up on the sidewalk, and was picked up and carried in. I was left on a lounge in a room full of men in all sorts of strange garments, while the proprietress hurried to bring me brandy. The Englishman of our table who had been so anxious to eat his ice cream was in a pink dressing-gown. He came and sat by me. I asked him if he had seen Mr. Friend. He shook his head without answering.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

I was given brandy and, with help, walked upstairs and was put to bed. All night I kept expecting Mr. Friend to appear, looking for me. All night long men kept coming into our rooms, snapping on the lights, bringing children for us to identify, taking telegrams, getting our names for the list of survivors, etc., etc. I kept asking officials for news of Mr. Friend and giving a description of him.

A civil engineer, who lives near Hartford and knew of me, took it upon himself to look everywhere for Mr. Friend in hotels and hospitals and private houses. He returned every two or three hours, but brought no news. I will not write more now of that night and my illness and frightful anxiety about Mr. Friend.

Three days later, when I was taken to Cork, I became convinced that Mr. Friend was delirious from injury and unidentified, and put notices in two papers for a week. I simply cannot write any more about it now.

P.S. Did you hear of the way in which I was saved? Mrs. Naish, to whom in a great measure I owe my life, saw me pulled on board with boat hooks. The oar had worked up under my knee and kept me afloat. I was the last one rescued

## LAI'D WITH THE DEAD

by that ship and was laid on deck with the dead. Mrs. Naish touched me and says I felt like a sack of cement, I was so stiff with salt water. She was convinced I could be saved and induced two men to work over me, which they did for two hours, after cutting my clothes off with a carving-knife hastily brought from the dining-saloon. They say that one suffers greatly in being restored from drowning, but I was totally unconscious of it all, owing to the effect of the blow on my head, and was unconscious for some time after breathing was restored. I seem to have escaped several separate deaths in a miraculous way.

Mr. Friend was lost.

### *Strange Escape from the Lusitania*

From England to an American friend.

May 22, 1915

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

You like incredible stories, don't you. This one is quite incredible, but is vouched for by a most estimable old student at Oxford, who declares it happened to her sister-in-law.

She and her husband were on the Lusitania. She was lowered in one of the boats and he



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

jumped after her, as the ship heeled over. She heeled more and more till one of the great funnels lay level with the boat and the indraught drew her out of that boat like a cork and sucked her up the funnel.

Just then, something — presumably a boiler — exploded inside the ship and Mrs. X. (perfectly conscious all the time) was shot out again into the sea.

Some little time later, Mr. X. heard his name called and, looking round, found he was being hailed by an affectionate negress, in whom he at first entirely failed to recognize his wife!

She says it's true!

Yours ever.

From Charles E. Lauriat, Jr.

Boston, *August 6, 1915*

DEAR MRS. GRANT: —

... The woman who went down the funnel was in the collapsible boat of which I had charge. She was the wife of a minister and she found him on the fishing smack to which we rowed. Any one who saw that meeting will never forget it. Saturday morning in Queenstown I saw them both and we spoke again of their experiences.

I wish you every success in your work.

## WARNING

### *A German View of the Lusitania*

Germany, May 10, 1915

We are quite overcome today by the terrible accident to the Lusitania.

The experience of nine months of such harrowing warfare should have sufficed to convince anyone that the German communiqués are always true, but you continue to believe all the lies and the exaggerations of our enemies in spite of the facts.

They threaten us with famine and complete destruction, nothing less. We will defend ourselves to the last: we have said it, but they laugh at us and jeer as if it were a 'bluff.' A little more seriousness and dignity on the part of our adversaries would be more becoming and if they had had a truer sense of the situation the lives of hundreds of persons would have been saved.

The Ambassador warned the public, and instead of heeding him, they have turned upon him with abuse.

The result has overwhelmed those who refused to believe in the energy and determination of the German people.

# LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

## *Chase of a Zeppelin*

From a Canadian aviator.

Naval Air Station

May 25, 1915

Since I wrote, Monday morning the 17th, a Zeppelin blew along, evidently looking for our Aerodrome. We heard him and presently saw him coming in from the sea. I asked our C.O. if I could go after him, and got away with some bombs, grenades and a revolver. It was in the middle of the night, a little after 1 A.M. and no moon, so dark you could not see the horizon. He passed over here about two thousand feet up and by the time he got to Ramsgate, I was up even with him and to seaward. He had stopped to drop his bombs, and with his engine shut down, heard me coming and must have seen the flames from my exhaust valves. Anyway, he did not wait to throw any more bombs, and I saw the most wonderful sight. I was about fifteen hundred feet from him. He opened fire with Maxims which had no effect, and then majestically stuck his nose up and rose like a balloon. I chased him up to eight thousand feet and over to the French coast; and a little later, we went into the clouds together. Having lost him in the clouds, I

## DODGING SEARCHLIGHTS

climbed to ninety-five hundred feet and rambled around waiting for him. But he had gone. He ran away so fast that I could not keep up with him and climb at the same time. There was no use waiting longer, so I started for home. I swung around out to sea from the French coast, going north by compass. It was very dark. I could not see the sea or land and no stars or moon, as I was in the clouds. Talk about being alone in the world, very few people know what it means!

After some time, three big searchlights jumped out of the darkness below. Instantly I knew that they were from a cruiser and were looking for me, having heard my engine. At night they fire on anyone, as they cannot see our large red circles. So, not being particularly anxious to see how close they could come, I started to dodge the large beams and headed out north into the open sea again. I worked my way gradually back dodging searchlights and later on saw a lightship, and then the coast, which looked very dim away down below; but it was home and once more I felt in the world. I could not come down for two reasons. Firstly it was not light enough to land; and secondly, I knew I would be fired on if I went low. So I had to play around up in the sky over

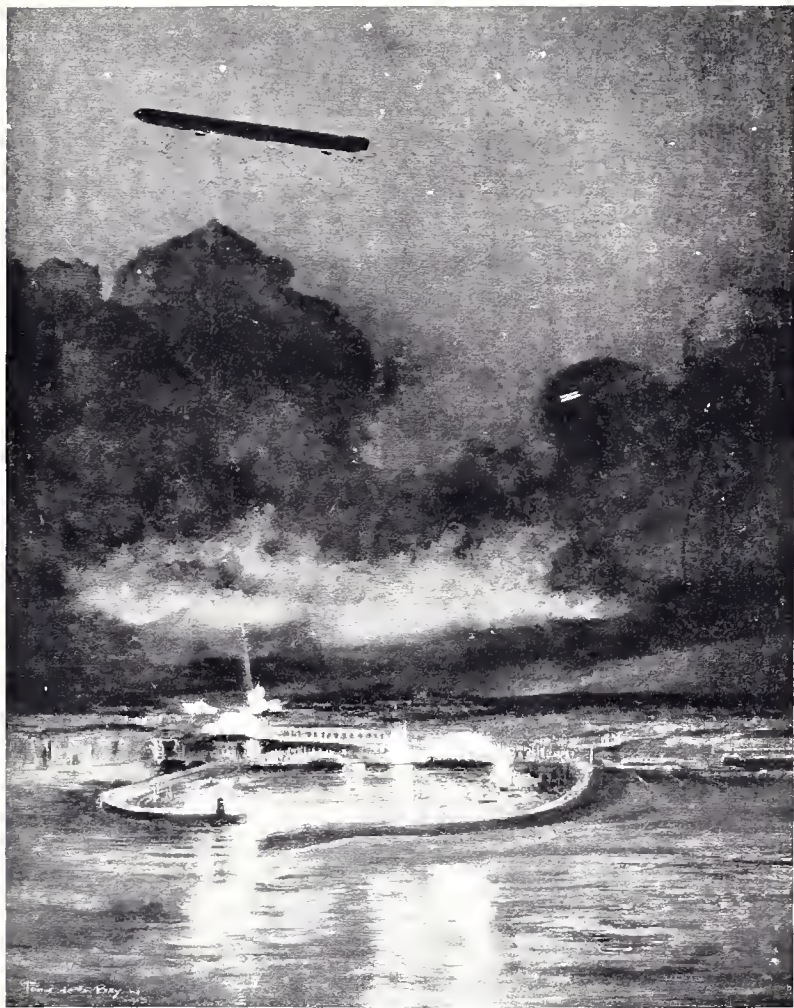
## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

the sea seventy-five hundred feet up, waiting for the sun to rise. As soon as it was light enough, I came down, and everyone seemed glad to see me back, as they had given me up. I cannot begin to tell you all about it, as one has to go through a night like that to realize what wonderful things we have. I enjoyed every minute of it and every minute was different. I am the only Pilot who has so far succeeded in chasing a Zep at night, and I have had to write all kinds of particulars to the Admiralty about it. I do wish you could have been with me. My engine gave out once over the North Sea, but I was able to keep her going slowly, and finally, as I was gliding down to the ocean, for some unknown reason, it picked up again. I was going to glide for one of the searchlights and land in the water alongside, and be picked up by a torpedo boat, but luck was with me. Dodging searchlights at night over the North Sea is the finest sport in the world.

There is a picture in the 'Illustrated London News' showing a Zeppelin dropping bombs and a little aeroplane after it. That's me! The others don't know what they missed by not coming over. It was real life while it lasted.

I wonder how you all are back in beautiful Canada. I am so glad you are so far away from





‘A ZEPPELIN DROPPING BOMBS AND A LITTLE AEROPLANE  
AFTER IT. THAT’S ME!’

The picture in the *Illustrated London News*





## FROM A CANADIAN

all the trouble that is going on here, and only hope that none of you will ever even get a glimpse of war and all that goes with it. War is not fancy uniforms, drums and bands, but I think we are very slowly getting on top. The end is never mentioned and no one thinks of it. It seems as if we had always been at this game.

*From a Canadian Officer*

*May 27, 1915*

DEAREST MOTHER AND DAD,

We just got back last night to our billets after having spent four days in the trenches. I did not go up the first day, as I had to look after the Transport. When I got there about seven o'clock in the evening, our men were in the second line trench. About ten o'clock we were ordered to go up and take over about three hundred yards of first line which the enemy had just been shoved out of about an hour before. All the night we certainly worked for all we were worth digging ourselves in, all the time being sniped at and shelled from all sides. You can be sure it was no merry jest. When it began to get light we had erected some sort of protection, and we hung on there until we were sent back to the reserve,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

where we stayed for about ten hours, then came back here.

The noise is terrific, and rather a scarcity of food and water. All the time I was there I only had about three hours' sleep, and my centre has assumed the proportions of a greyhound, still I am sound, which is something and I do not mind how long they keep us here before repeating the experience. I can tell you it's not all it's cracked up to be and we had rather a severe dose, still I believe we did our little bit well. Our men are a fine lot of fellows, every one of them played the game all the way through.

We have it all over the Germans in morale. They won't stand for the cold steel at all, but they make wonderful use of their machine guns and artillery. I expect it will be a little while before we go in again, as we will have to bring ourselves up to strength again. They smashed us up rather badly.

There is no question that the enemy are beginning to weaken and I don't think it will be long before we see them on the Rhine. If they had had any gumption we would have been very nicely wiped out, and as the Major put it, 'History would have been made for Canada.'

I can tell you we ought to be proud of our little

## YPRES

Canadian division. There's nothing can touch them out here, except perhaps the pick of the English troops.

Au revoir. Much love to all.

Your loving son

JOHN GALT, JR.

The writer was reported 'wounded and missing,' on December 9, 1915, and his father received official notice of his death on the 4th of August, 1916.

### *The Ruins of Ypres*

From a Canadian officer.

June 16, 1915

We left our horses about twenty-five miles behind the line and embussed, as the new military term says, at 9 A.M., one day in the end of May. We debussed at Poperinghe and marched to our camp about two miles behind the line near Ypres. It was a most wonderful sight. The bombardment had started very suddenly and was very violent and everything was left exactly as the people were when they hurriedly cleared out. Every house has been hit first by high explosives and then shrapnel. In some cases the whole of the front wall has been blown down, and the house looks like a doll's house with the front re-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

moved. In the estaminets, the glasses of beer (full) are standing on the tables with the chairs round: in private houses the pianos are open with music on them, the Cloth Hall is a ruin, with the Belgian Royal Funeral Coach standing untouched in the middle of it. Every few hundred yards the smouldering flames have momentarily burst up, only to die down, because everything inflammable in Ypres is burnt out now. Every few minutes you hear the ghostly half scream, half sigh, of the shells going over — and then, 'Crump,' into somebody's home.

Then we went up to the tip of the Salient. Major Hunt was hit on the way up, so I had the squadron the rest of the time. We got to the reserve dug-outs in the middle of the night, and I was told we should be in reserve the next day. So we settled down. They shelled us intermittently that day, but we had no casualties. That night we went up as a working party. The Censor won't allow me to tell you what we did, but it was most interesting. The bullets were coming on three sides. It sounds as if it were most unpleasant, but curiously enough it wasn't; I suppose it's discipline — the beginning and the end of soldiering — that makes one forget that one is fighting. You get your orders and pass them in,

## BOMBARDMENT

and dig for all the world as if you were in Salisbury Plain or instructing sappers in field works at Chatham. Every few yards you dig up a dead man or horse and the smell (phew)! It's infinitely worse than bullets.

We dug till dawn in what must once have been a beautiful old château, with its stables and park; and then relieved another squadron in the front line. We made ourselves a little dug-out and were just settling down to what we fondly believed was to be a tedious day, when — well, it just started, 'Crump, Crump!'

They shelled us from 5 A.M. till 11.30, with every sort of gun from whiz-bangs to howitzers, and after every high explosive, they put in shrapnel. I remembered reading about the German prisoners at Neuve-Chapelle with their faces yellow with lyddite smoke; and I looked at Farthing; he was black with H.E. smoke and so was I. That day I smoked eighty cigarettes — I don't know what I should have done without them. At 11.30 the Boche knocked off for lunch and sent an aeroplane over which had a good look at us. The bombardment started again at 1 P.M. After about an hour, we were shelled out and left one lookout and went into some cellars in the houses of the village. I can't describe being

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

shelled out. You must imagine it. Imagine a trench, five foot, being blown as flat as a billiard table and 'Crump, Crump, Crump!' the whole time.

At 4 P.M. the bombardment stopped suddenly, and whirr overhead the damned aeroplane. I apologize for the language, but no other word suffices. I suppose it saw us in the houses; anyhow at 4.20 the bombardment started again more violently and more concentrated on us. The air was so thick with high explosive smoke you could hardly breathe, and the noise!

However, they didn't get a direct hit, but merely succeeded in giving me an appalling headache and filling my lungs with smoke. At 5 P.M. the bombardment suddenly stopped, and my lookout shouted, 'Come on, boys!! they're coming!' That sounds like the 'Daily Mail,' but it's true. We rushed out and lined a heap of bricks that was once a village. It was a sight. The Germans were debouching from a wood nine hundred yards away; they were Bavarians, and in open order, unfortunately. I say unfortunately, because I believe there wasn't a man there who didn't devoutly pray that the Prussian Guard would come out in masses. We had sat under a very heavy bombardment for twelve

## BACK TO CAMP

hours, and would have given anything to have been able to hit back. The order was passed down, 'Hold your fire till they come up to you, and then get at them with the bayonet.' The Maxim fired, and we saw a few drop as they advanced. However, they thought better of it and dug themselves in, and then the blessed relief came along and we went back to the camp. Previous to this we put out a few snipers and one of my fellows said he accounted for twelve Boches. I hope he did. Well, we lived a week in camp, listening to the guns and rifles, and watching the flares go up at night. We watched battalions marching up to the trenches, singing, in the evening, and we watched battalions straggling back, unshaved, unwashed, dead silent, in the dawn. Day and night we heard Ypres being 'Crumped.' We buried Renton one night in Vlamertinghe Cemetery; it was the most impressive thing I have ever seen.

'Who dies, if England lives?'

I dined one night with the 4th Fusiliers, who were having a ten days' rest near by. I knew a couple of them in India. They have had ninety-two officers in their battalion since the war began. There is no doubt about it our infantry are the best in the world. The menu was soup, crab,



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

veal, stewed fruit, asparagus, cheese, champagne, whiskey, port, brandy, cigars. Rifle fire easily audible from three sides.

One day we were playing tip and run in the evening, when 'Crump' the old Boche dropped a shell five hundred yards up the road. It stopped the game pretty effectively. They sent over a dozen altogether and then stopped. That night there was a concert, given by the 8th Hussars, in a barn just opposite, which I will try to explain.

War was forgotten. A Tommy, dressed up as a girl, sang ragtime, two or three officers sang songs — all comic, nothing serious, everyone was thoroughly happy. Then Private Pellici of the 17th Lancers got up and sang 'O sole mio' in Italian with a beautiful voice and then sang a comic song interspersed with chat about the horrors of war — suddenly a shell burst two hundred yards away, and another closer, and another closer still. But he never lost his head. He acted most beautifully, as if he were in a blue funk — to the intense amusement of everybody, then suddenly stopped, and sang Tosti's 'Good-bye' in his splendid voice. While he was singing, the shells were bursting so near that they put all the lights out one by one. At the end the Senior Officer present ordered us to go back, and we had

## A WOUNDED BROTHER

just started to go out, when a voice from the back said, 'What about the King?' I suppose I have sung 'God save the King' several thousand times, but never under such dramatic circumstances.

We got back and found the regiment in a field, as the camp was distinctly unhealthy. At about 11 P.M. the Boche, with an incendiary shell, set fire to Vlamertinghe Church. We watched for about an hour (we were a mile away and it lit up the whole country skies) until the spire collapsed with a crash. It was a wonderful sight. Poor Belgium!

Next day we embussed, and here we are again, quiet and peaceful and putting in a lot of sleep.

Our casualties were six officers and eighty-four men, or very nearly forty per cent.

### *A Wounded Brother*

From a French Countess.

For a month I have been occupied in nursing the wounded, of whom there are a great many here in Avignon. My three brothers, as you know, are at the front; and one day a telegram came with word that Henri, my youngest brother, had been wounded at Nancy. I left at once for the frontier with a safe conduct pass from the military governor of Lyons — a friend of ours — and

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

my Red Cross badge. What a journey! I arrived at Nancy the moment the Germans started to bombard the city. All the hospitals had been emptied, and the station, square, and surrounding streets were filled with wounded on stretchers — more than three thousand. I can't tell you the painful struggle I had to find my brother among all these unfortunates. I hurried hither and thither, and at last happily and almost by accident, I came upon Henri as he was being lifted, on a stretcher, into a cattle car. He was a mass of bandages, for he had been wounded by the bursting of a shell, which made a great hole in his head and mutilated one of his legs cruelly. For many hours he lay senseless on the battlefield, and, while there, received a rifle bullet in the other leg. It was only the week before that he was twice mentioned for gallantry in the orders of the day. I got into the car with him. It was of the kind used for cattle. The floor was covered with wounded men, so that it was impossible to move about. Many were very weak; four died *en route*. We were delayed hours while trainloads of fresh troops were rushed by us to the front. Three days passed. At last, we reached Dijon, where the wounded were transferred to a military hospital. Here I remained three days. Then, as

## A WOUNDED BROTHER

many things were needed, I decided to return to the château. Imagine what happened. At Valence, worn out, I got off the train for a cup of coffee, and there, on the platform in the midst of a crowd of strangers, I lost consciousness. Of what followed, I have no remembrance. Nearly four weeks later, I woke to find myself a charity patient in the common ward of a small hospital. During the disturbance at the station, someone had stolen my travelling-case containing my money, safe-conduct, and identification papers. I had been suffering from a serious meningitis. What an awakening! What a return to life! As soon as I had enough strength, I telegraphed and was identified. No one knew where I was, and if I had died in the hospital, my fate would always have remained a mystery.

The brother, Henri, of whom the Countess speaks, recovered from his wounds and returned to the front. He has since been killed.

### *In a Burning Plane*

King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers  
*June or July, 1915*

MY DEAR MOTHER AND FATHER,

... I cannot write myself, as my head and eyes and wrist are all tied up with bandages, but the Chaplain is writing for me.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

It was Hell coming down all in flames and the burning petrol rushing about all over the machine. This burnt us a good deal and nearly suffocated us as well. By the grace of God we just managed to land a few hundred yards one side of the battle line. In another ten seconds the tail and the controlling apparatus, which were already alight, would have had insufficient grip of the air to keep the machine at all under control. As it was the speed indicator showed well over one hundred and twenty miles an hour before it was burnt away, and it was most doubtful if I could prevent the machine in its flaming state from crashing nose first into the ground. If it had done this, there would have been nothing left to bury. As it was we just managed to do it. We were also extraordinarily lucky in that, though we had some fifty odd rounds of ball ammunition left of what we carried for our Maxim gun, and it went off round by round, the bullets crashing through the steel framework, not one hit either of us.

When we got out of the machine, half suffocated, we rolled on the ground to put out the flames, and the next thing I remember is being carried back on a stretcher by some extremely plucky stretcher-bearers of the Rifle Brigade,

## IN A BURNING PLANE

under a heavy shrapnel fire. After that we were temporarily dressed at two stations and came by a motor ambulance to a hospital in Hazebruck. People were very kind to us there, and our Colonel and General came and congratulated us. The General seemed very pleased, more especially as earlier in the morning we had succeeded after a scrap in the air in bringing down a German fighting machine, which was a good deal larger than ourselves. He told us that he was telling the tale to Sir John French, which was very kind of him. I forgot to say in this rambling letter that we had our fight with the German machine about five miles between the German lines at heights varying between seven thousand and eight thousand feet above the ground level. We had previously been reconnoitering, and we carried on with it after the fight, and it was then that we were hit by shrapnel which burst in our petrol tank, setting it at once alight and squirting fire all over the machine, as the petrol was under pressure. This was at a height of a little under four thousand feet, and still well within the German lines. I was particularly anxious to land within our lines so that the information gathered by my observer might be utilized, and also that neither we nor our machine might be captured. A party of mechan-



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

ics went to look at our machine and I hear there is nothing left except charred wood and a metal frame riddled with bullet holes.

One of the Rifle Brigade gave me a fuse from a shell which arrived a few yards off the machine after it had come to rest. This was still warm when he gave it to me, so that the Germans were very smart in getting their guns to work on us, for it came from a different battery from the one that brought us down. They had been shelling us considerably for about an hour before our fight with their machine, but we managed to let go our bombs before we were hit. Had these been in the machine when she was blazing, there would have been nothing left to pick up. The German machine squirted bad at us with a Maxim, but we knocked that out before very long, and then one of his engines as well. I wish the fight had been over our lines and that their machine might have come down there, when we should have been able to examine it carefully and in detail, since it was, I think, the finest German machine I have ever seen, and in the earlier stage of the fight was manœuvred extremely well, though afterward it was not so good. The whole affair took place to the northeast of Ypres and within sight of it. I think we knocked out one or two



## IN A BURNING PLANE

of the German crew. Their machine came down in a manner which could hardly have been comfortable to those inside it: if they were all able to feel. We fought at ranges of one hundred yards to eight hundred yards and at speeds varying from forty-five to ninety-five miles an hour. Thanks to the leather clothing which both of us wore, we were not burnt as much as might have been expected. H.'s legs and arms, body and head were burnt and so are my head and right wrist. My left leg and knee are bandaged and hurt abominably. They have X-rayed it, but do not appear to have found out what the trouble is. With luck it is only a bad wrench and strain, received as I was trying to get clear of the machine. In doing this my left leg got caught in a wire, for both my eyes were more or less done in: and I was hung up for a bit. They are treating us both very well here and we really have nothing much to grouse at, although I expect it will mean having to go on half-pay for a bit when we get home.

Your loving son.

# LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

## *A Dead Son*

From a father in Vancouver whose son was killed in July, 1915.

The loss of Duncan, you can well understand, is overwhelming. He was just twenty-seven, in the full maturity of his powers and fit to do useful work in the world.

To see our two boys back here safe at the end of the war was all we wanted to live for. Now one boy, at least, will never come home again, and with months, perhaps years, of fighting still to be expected, will Robin come through alive? Who can tell?

Still, for each dear life that is sacrificed, we ought to be more firmly determined, that there must be no thought of a weak peace: no thought of peace at all, until the invaded countries are freed: until the nation that has caused such widespread misery in the world is made powerless for harm, for the future.

When there is victory, complete enough to give us that result, and not till then, we shall be able to say that the men we have lost have not laid down their lives in vain.

# DISCIPLINE OF THE CANADIANS

## *Slaughter by the French*

From a young French officer to a Canadian friend.

10 July, 1915

MY DEAR —

I intend writing as long a letter as I can, but I want you to realize that what I may write is not a 'romance,' but plain truth about what war really is now-a-days. Consequently show my letter to any one you like.

First — Let me tell you how glad I am to hear that everyone in Montreal is 'Answering the call.' I realize perfectly what your mother must have felt when John left, but later on, whatever may happen, in the bottom of her heart she will be happy and proud. I'm sorry for you, old man; I know exactly what your feelings must have been. Sit still and grin; it's the only thing to do, but I realize how sick you must have been when the doctors turned you down.

Yes! you can be proud of the Canadian Contingent. At first, reports spread everywhere in France that the Canadians (outside the P.P.L.I.) were unmanageable — no discipline — etc., etc., Salisbury Plains. I think that some of the reports were exaggerated, but there was a lot of truth in others. At all events, when your boys

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

landed in Belgium they behaved wonderfully. Personally I only saw them in trenches, but one regiment charged on the right of my battalion near Langemark in April, and our own men here still talk about it. What struck all our men the most was their 'ignorance de danger' (no fear). Of course they weren't old seasoned troops like ours, who knew everything of the game. Nevertheless, the way they fought was terrific. Translating exactly in English what one of my sergeants told me I can tell you this. These Canadians charged four hundred yards on our right, and left their trenches the same time we did. Do you think they went over the ground in a military, scientific way — jumping up by sections — covering fifteen or twenty yards — throwing themselves on the ground — up again and so on? No! Sir. They ran like a pack of hounds. They had four or five small yellow flags that they waved. They never stopped once, though their losses were awful — under rifle fire the whole way. And when they got to the German trench and saw the gases there — they simply stopped and shot — while our officers — seeing the cloud coming — made us retreat four or five hundred yards.

I am sorry to say that my battalion has been

## LIFE A NIGHTMARE

sent to another part of the front and I haven't had a chance of seeing an English soldier since my return to the firing line. We are... in France ... miles away from the English right wing. Since my last letter we have done a lot of good work here. I thought at first I would be sent on staff work, as my wrist is awfully weak, but up to now I have been kept with my old regiment. For a week or so we were kept to our trenches, right up to the German positions, and life in some places was a nightmare — hand bombs — gas (when the wind was right) — petroleum lighted with Roman candles — land torpedoes — and mines. Well, I managed to scrape through all right, although I had some pretty close shaves. Every two or three days we were relieved for forty-eight hours. Ten days ago, when we had taken to the trenches again, we were told that the next morning our battalion with two regiments (seventy-five hundred men in all) had to carry the three German trenches. A deep and long mine which our sappers had been digging for two or three weeks would be fired (sprung — whatever you call it) at three A.M. as a signal to the artillery, who would immediately open fire, and go on firing until five. At five sharp we would have to jump out and make a dash for it.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Well! I can't say that we slept much that night — we nearly all wrote letters home. My post was in the cellar of a small brick house — our trench going right under it — I remember scribbling to the mater and to a friend. The fatigue party (cooks) carried our letters away at 1 A.M. The Germans seemed quiet enough, although the firing through the loopholes never stopped. At 2.55 my company fell back to a second trench so as to give every chance to the mine, which ran under the first German trench, to blow up without injuring any of our men. I remember the sapper going down the trench to light the fuse; he was a fat sergeant and looked quite happy. 'Three thousand kilogs of chid-dite (six thousand pounds), mon lieutenant,' he whispered with a grin, before disappearing down below. We had to wait about four minutes and then — 'up she went' with a roar. I waited until nearly all the stones had come down, and then we all rushed to trench No. 1, so as to prevent a German rush, in case our mine had been too short or too long.

The minute our mine went up, our guns, about four hundred, started firing. For some time we kept huddled, wondering if some of our shells, which were screeching fifteen or twenty feet

## WAITING FOR THE ZERO HOUR

above our heads, and bursting from forty to four hundred yards in front, would not fall short and kill us. After a time we got used to it, but the din was terrific; several men were bleeding from their noses and ears. Well! there I sat for another hour or so, watching the men, who were watching me, looking at my watch and smoking cigarettes.

What did I think about? Nothing much, except that I was thirsty and that the leg of my breeches was torn. Little by little the hands of my watch crept on. At 4.55 I called out to the men; they got up and jumped on the parapet, where they lay flat. I gave them a good look; they seemed more or less in a trance, their eyes were glassy and their faces white as chalk — but the way their mouths were set gave me confidence. One or two shook hands. An old private, lying down by a very young corporal, suddenly kissed him on the cheek and then lay down flat again, without a movement. My orderly behind me tugged at my ankle. I could see that he had something to say, but the din was too terrific. He looked very excited; I noticed the beads of sweat all over his face. Putting my ear to his mouth he yelled, 'Till the very last, mon lieutenant.' He wanted me to know, before we started, that he



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

would follow me wherever we went. I remember patting him on the shoulder.

Now that the time had come I felt perfectly calm; my only thought was, 'Will I be able to handle my men as they ought to be handled?' I stood up on the parapet, all the other officers along the line doing so at more or less the same time. Not a single bullet was fired from the German trenches, which were hidden under a dense cloud of black smoke. The artillery was perhaps more terrific than ever; one could feel that the German forces were absolutely paralyzed by the rain of shells. From where I stood I could see clearly that for fifty yards in front, the wire entanglements were torn to pieces, and that nothing could prevent us jumping the first German trench. Our artillery was already lengthening its range and hammering in front and behind the last German trench, four hundred and fifty yards away. Just as I was looking to my left and noticing that my captain had a pipe in his mouth, the artillery stopped firing. Never shall I forget the contrast between the deafening everlasting roar and the awful silence that followed it. Every man had jumped up; the captain waved his cap. We were off. My one idea was to reach and climb the first German trench

## TAKING THE GERMAN TRENCHES

before my men. I knew that then every man would follow. Just as I was reaching the wire, that was lying in shreds everywhere, I noticed that the German artillery was firing its first salvos in front of its third trench. I jumped over the first shred, which was one mass of torn flesh and earth. Turning around, I saw my men tearing after me. Up to now not a sound but the crash of the German shells ahead of us. The battalion was racing mute. Over the first trench everyone jumped. We raced to the second — two or three German machine guns commenced pattering on my right and left. Running along a communicating trench that was absolutely at right angles with the main trench, I noticed that it was full of Germans, dead, wounded and whole, lying flat on the ground, their faces in their hands. I didn't stop, and waved to the men to come on. I knew that the reserve forces would get them in a few minutes. We were on the second trench in no time. Ten or twelve Germans were in it. Up went their hands. I yelled out (for the first time) to the men to go on. I heard one or two rifle cracks and in a second — we were all of us right inside the German shells. I don't know how we went through those fifty yards. I saw men go down singly, by twos and

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

threes, cut up in pieces. Then — before I knew where we were, we found ourselves in the third trench. After that for some time I can't remember truthfully what happened. I had a rifle in my hand with a fixed bayonet. I shot a German full in the face; then jumped down on him; I slipped and fell. One of my men who had jumped in on my right was shot and fell on top of me. Before I could rise, my section was either in the trench or on the parapet. My men were giving tongue now all along the line; the battalion was at close quarters. The fight must have lasted five minutes. Every German was killed. I bayoneted two, as, one after the other, they ran up to me, some of my men chasing them from behind.

When everything was over, suddenly we heard a mass of men behind us, and, to our astonishment, there was a whole German battalion, pouring everywhere from dugouts, towards us, over the ground we had just covered. The brutes had dug such caves that we hadn't seen them. They lay there during our bombardment and afterwards their own, till, frightened by the arrival of our reserves, who were now butchering everything between trench number one and two, they charged towards us, hoping to break through.

## EVERY MAN SLAUGHTERED

As our artillery was dropping shells by the thousand a hundred yards ahead of the last German trench, to prevent any German reinforcements from coming up, and the German guns had stopped firing so as not to kill their own men, we faced back and waited for them. Never in my life shall I see such a fight. The Germans could not face the open because of our bullets. They tried everywhere to reach our trench by the communication trenches, of which there was a perfect network. Being, of course, in single file, their losses were terrific. We blocked the trenches with sand bags and 'machine-gunned' them 'en filade.' We had hand grenades and bombs, which we threw at them when they got too close. One company jumped out in the open and tried to rush us. Every man was mowed down. The longer the fight lasted, the more our reserves were arriving. The Germans ran back to their dugouts. Both our lines closed in. Some tried to surrender, some fought. We were so closely packed that nobody could take the responsibility of taking prisoners. Every man was slaughtered.

While we were fighting more or less under ground a second force of French reserves came up, running in the open, and taking our last

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

position in trench No. 3. They started firing at once, as the Germans were trying to counter-attack. (All this I knew afterwards, of course.) Meanwhile we went on in a most methodical way, closing in, following everywhere the lines of communication trenches. What I saw during an hour beggars all description. I saw men fight with spades. I saw a wounded Frenchman and a wounded German on the ground in a pool of blood trying to strangle each other. The Frenchman dug his nails in the other man's eyes. Waiting for my chance, I managed to 'butt' the German's head; he let go his hold, and then I finished him with a bayonet in the throat. My orderly (who, by the way, is an Alsatian who ran away from the German army two years ago) discovered a large quantity of hand bombs. Every time he came up to a dugout he would yell in German, 'Anybody in.' Immediately the cries of 'Kamerad' were heard — then he would light the fuse and throw the bomb inside. 'Adieu boches.' One would also see men lying flat at the entrance to a cave and firing their rifles time after time into the openings. The way the Germans yelled was awful. Some Germans made a good fight, some would hold up their hands, then shoot or throw a grenade, some

## FIGHTING IN COLD BLOOD

would crawl on their knees holding a picture of a woman or a child in their hands above their heads, yelling surrender. Every man was killed. In the end I used my two revolvers. One had to be very careful. I shot several wounded and several dead, simply because I did not dare walk over their bodies. (German soldiers have a nasty habit of slashing with a bayonet or shooting your guts out with a revolver.) A fine-looking captain charged out of a dugout with a fixed bayonet and almost got me. Happily he tripped over some dead bodies and fell; I shot him as he was rising.

During the last part of the fight we had lots of time for resting and making arrangements. The excitement was gone. We fought in cold blood because it was our duty to kill as much as we could. I thought many a time then of the Lusitania. I had actually prayed for that day. I got it, and killed just as much as I had hoped fate would allow me to kill.

What else can I tell you? Little by little the fight died down. The German rifles, accoutrements, bombs, grenades, machine guns, etc., were lying everywhere by hundreds (except machine guns, I counted fifteen). While we were cleaning the underground our second reserves



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

had strongly entrenched themselves in trench No. 3. The German artillery was beginning to fire everywhere, happily not very heavily — lack of ammunition, I suppose.

My battalion got orders to fall back (2.00 P.M.). We were exhausted. We lay down till night fell in trench No. 1, then managed to crawl out and muster eight miles in the rear. We had lost six hundred men, including seven officers (one hundred and fifty dead, four hundred and fifty wounded), but were damn proud of ourselves. In fact, the battalion was mentioned officially.

Since that fight we have rested four days, gone back to some trenches further east for four days, then gone back to the rear again for another rest. We expect to go back to the trenches again in a couple of days.

I went through the last fight without a scratch, although my left wrist is so swollen and weak, also painful, that I will never be able, I am afraid, to fight with a fixed bayonet again.

The situation here in a personal way is rather hopeless. The only thing that can happen is to get wounded or killed. One knows very well that it is absolutely impossible to go through a war like this for weeks or months without getting hit.



## LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

But let us not think of the future. We are as happy as clams just now. We have from twenty-four to forty-eight hours still to live without facing death again.

### *Life in the Trenches*

From Robert Ward Shepherd Robertson, R.M. Reg., Fourteenth Battalion, Private. Won commission later.

Belgium, *July 11, 1915*

DEAR MOTHER,

I spent my twenty-first birthday in the reserve trenches playing cards most of the day. In fact, it was as uneventful a birthday as I have ever had. As you will have guessed by my field service cards we are in the trenches again and they are quite the most comfortable we have occupied up to date. This part of the line is very quiet, there being practically no artillery fire.

I expect you would like to get a good idea of trench life. Of course it varies a good deal at different places, according to local conditions.

'Stand To' occurs at dawn and dusk and usually lasts an hour, and while it is on every man is supposed to be at his post at the parapet in case of an attack. It is 1.45 A.M. and the sky is

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

just beginning to lighten in the east. The sleeping men are roused and tumble out of their dug-outs and take their places on the firing platform. Night gradually turns into day. At three, 'Stand Clear and Post Day Sentries' is passed down the line. A sentry is posted who does most of his observing by a periscope, for it is now light and a little dangerous on account of snipers to expose one's head too often, and a couple go off to cook breakfast for the team.

We have tea at seven and at nine 'Stand To' is called. 'Stand Clear and Post Night Sentries' is called at ten.

When a flare goes up, those who are exposed drop flat, and lie still, until it goes out.

*July 22*

We have just completed that long spell in the trenches. I am by no means sorry to get out for a while, although the trenches we were holding were very good ones and quite quiet as trenches go. We went in on the 6th of this month and remained in the front line without a break until the 17th, thirteen days, and then stayed three days in a fort a couple of hundred yards back. Last night, our Brigade was relieved and came back here, a matter of two or three miles.

## SLEEPING ON BARE BOARDS

This time we are billeted in small huts instead of the usual barn, and in this warm weather it is rather an improvement. They are kept spotlessly clean, and although the sleeping accommodation is only the bare boards, yet I am so accustomed to a hard bed that I do not think I could sleep as well in an ordinary one. They are not as large as the ones on Lack Hill were and hold only fourteen men.

Borden was over here while we were in the trenches, but as far as I know never ventured into the front lines. A representative proportion of our Brigade was taken out of the trenches, brushed up and cleaned and inspected by him.

Must close now.

Your loving son

WARD ROBERTSON

The writer was killed on May 27, 1917, aged twenty-two years.

### *Nursing in Galicia*

From a Red Cross nurse.

Galicia, July 14, 1915

MY DEAR AUNT,

We had the hardest week of work not far from here last week, and we seem to have met the

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

situation to the satisfaction of the authorities. Our transport has been first mentioned in despatches, because they came back at footpace with the wounded — in spite of shells bursting all round, and most of them get the cross. Then we evacuated wounded so very quickly, and never sent one away undressed or carelessly done, and the *English* doctor gets a very distinguished medal. I *am* so glad, he has worked like a black. I hear the wounded have everywhere mentioned how well they were cared for in the tents. So all the sanitors (?) and the cook and the sister get a medal for 'Zeal.' I am so glad the men thought we looked well after them. For being English it is difficult to understand all they need, and I had only Miss Ewbank to help me, and she worked splendidly, and after the cholera came, practically did all the other ward work. I call it 'ward work,' but it was two tents full, two station rooms, three long rows lying on the ground, covered only with straw against the cold and wet. But straw is wonderful stuff, and all said they were quite warm, when I went round at midnight in a gale of wind!

The cholera fell to me, because of my former experience of fever, and I had the last three nights also on a heap of straw near my patients.

## NURSING CHOLERA PATIENTS

Beautiful nights except the last, when it rained, but we had the mackintoshes of those who had died (forty-five of wounds) — to cover them with and to burn afterwards.

The Doctor gave intra-venous saline injections and saved all but one. I had only three; the last died directly after he came in. It was the most marvellous thing medically I had ever seen. They were writhing with awful cramps, and no perceptible pulse. One man's muscles so hard that the hypodermic needle bent, and when at last I managed a camphor injection it remained where it was, there was no circulation. Then slowly the salt and water began to be taken, and after one pint the pulse was perceptible — after two the man began to lie still — allowed he was better. We gave four pints.

I had them under an acacia tree on straw, and no one came near me, and no one else got it that I know of. When we left, we sent them away, and I disinfected and burnt everything.

A perfectly beautiful little bird was nesting in the acacia tree, and I feared the flames would spoil her nest, but the wind took them the other way.

We then went to a priest's house, and the Princess, who had been ill before, got no better. It's a kind of malaria she has. She had been ten

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

days in her clothes on a camp bed, with a temperature from 103 to 104 every afternoon. I began to be her nurse there and am now completely with her. I am glad because for the moment there is no other nursing to be done.

From the priest's we went to a Jew's house, clean on the outside, but I have never been so eaten alive before. I slept in the house, and had a room to myself. The Russians said it smelt of Jews, and slept in the garden.

Then we came, just I and the Princess, to a beautiful castle, as she needed proper care, food and nursing. Some officers are living in the castle, and the house butler, a footman, buttons and woman cook, servants of the owner, are left, and they arranged we were to have the salon, a huge room, with immense golden chairs and tables, and into this our little beds were put, and two little screens — a little camp in a vast, desolate magnificence. I am glad we have a back room now. The butler has got a bed with a hair mattress and pillows for us. She is so weak. To have her clothes off and warm water wash and some food she can eat should make a lot of difference. We have our soldier servant, who sleeps in the bushes outside at night, and stands near the door all day, in case we need anything —

## A TERRIBLE AND THRILLING SIGHT

such a nice man. She is carried on her bed into the garden in the afternoon, and I get the room cleaned. Every morning I go down to the old vaulted kitchen, and order dinner just as if it were Escowbeck, and the cook speaks German, which makes it easy. It is a wonderful situation. Sheer fall to the valley on three sides on a tongue of land, and a view of miles and miles of yellow cornfields, mixed with strips of maize or clover and potatoes — patches of white where women are working, and roads running along the tops of the hills, where motors and convoys, troops and cavalry move. When I am quite old and have done with the struggles of life, if they ever do cease, I should like to sit in a silk dress and white cap, and watch the world working below me, from a castle window like this. The Lady of Shalot had nothing to remember, so no wonder there was a tragedy for her.

I saw one of the most terrible and the most thrilling sights I have yet seen, the day before we left the Jew's house. We were all sitting among the nettles and dock leaves having tea when we heard the sound of an aeroplane, then shots, and then two machines came into view, over the trees flying very high. There were more shots, and we realized it was an air battle, and



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

we recognised our friend an... aeroplane, worked by one of the Russians we know. It was terrible. The Russian overtook the Austrian, and got above him, and they seemed over our heads. There were more shots, and the Austrian tried to run into the Russian. Then we saw she was injured. She looked like a winged bird, and slowly, slowly began to come down. I seized my emergency R.X. box and fled. But I had had time to cross three fields and wade the river before she went out of sight, turning slowly like a withered leaf. When I got to the other hillside, I saw the flame and smoke coming from her, and knew my R.X. box would not be needed. It was a terrible thing, nothing was left, and the two brave men were burnt. Jews and peasants, soldiers, two and three on a horse, generals in motors and carriages, came streaming across the cornfields, and cheer after cheer went up — the Russian aeroplane circling round and looking for a place to land. They cheered the two victors — but they looked and were miserable. They said there was such a fellow feeling among flying men, that it was awful to have to kill the two. They had saluted each other before firing, and they had hoped they would give up the fight, seeing they were outmatched.

## GETTING READY TO ATTACK

The funeral was today with full military honours.

Your affectionate niece.

### *Billets*

From a British officer.

*September 15, 1915*

MY DEAR —

Our attack was timed a little while before the main operations as were several others: this was with a view of bringing on to us reserves and guns from Lille and we certainly drew a good deal.

We had three battalions attacking and ours was the right battalion. My company was the only one to assault, the other companies coming up to the ditch after I had got the line, and then, when we got into the trench, we were to get the second line and bomb towards the next battalion and block ourselves in on our right.

At 3.30 A.M. I got my company and eighty battalion bombers out into a ditch running parallel to their lines about three hundred yards off. The artillery were to bombard the front German trench for five minutes and then to lift at 4.30, and I was to crawl during the five minutes and make as much ground as possible. We crawled

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

to such purpose that we were almost on the Boche wire at 4.29 with the most awful inferno of shells going just over our heads onto the parapet. So we lay there one minute and then rushed on through the cut wire. We lost about twenty to thirty men in the assault, as some were shot by the machine gun the Boche got up on our left at the last moment and a few by our own shells, but we were so quick onto them that the machine-gunners, who had had orders to stand to as soon as our guns started, had not got their guns going before we were in. The prisoners were very indignant, as they said we did not come after the bombardment but with it, and the artillery general said it was the best-timed assault he had ever seen. The wire was well cut, but I managed to get into one bit and tore my breeches properly, but I got away from it all right and landed in the German trench just on the right of one of my subalterns — who was shot on the parapet and fell into the trench. There was a Boche shouting 'Oh, Kamerad!' who I think killed him. Anyway, I put a revolver shot through his shoulder. We took about twenty prisoners and then pushed on to their second line with bombs. We got two hundred yards of it and ought to have met the next bat-

## KILLED, WOUNDED, AND MISSING

talion, but we didn't. We found afterwards that their right company had failed to get in owing to wire and we were forced out of the second line and held about two hundred yards of the first. The other battalions we heard afterwards found it too hot and retired about midday. We held on till 4.30 and then had orders to retire, which was done most successfully back to the ditch, a few officers and stout men sacrificing themselves to hold the Germans back for the others to get out. My company was withdrawn at 3.30 P.M. to reorganize and go up again, as we never thought of retiring at that hour. Another of my subalterns was killed just in front of the German parapet. I had in my company two officers killed, nine men killed, fifty-four wounded and fourteen missing. The missing I'm pretty sure were either killed in the second line or in front of the parapet in our assault. — was in command most of the time in the German trench, though while he went back to confer with the Colonel I was in charge for about three hours — very anxious time.

— commanding A Company, was killed; — killed in my company in the assault leading bombers and — commanding D Company, was killed by a shell. We lost two hundred and

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

thirty-odd men. I was bothered with six Boche prisoners in the German trenches, so I made them get up and run back to our lines. They ran like the devil, but the Boches turned a machine gun on them and knocked out one or two.

I enjoyed the first part very much and it was exciting in the Boche trench. One Boche bomb burst about three yards from my face and never touched me. I had several shots with my revolver at men, and in addition to getting the one in the beginning, I got one later on with a rifle. I am not sure the main operations have been as successful as they ought to have been, but they seem to have done well.

I can't describe my feelings going for the Boche trench. It was probably the most exciting moment one has ever had, but my memory of it is blurred, and all I can actually remember was the flashes of the bursting shells, the continuous roar and scream of them and my relief at seeing the wire cut by the light of them.

I have only got one subaltern left, but I have just got a new one.

I expect we will be fighting again soon, but I don't know.

## A ZEPPELIN RAID IN LONDON

### *Air Raid in London*

Surrey, *September 10, 1915*

Harry and I were in the Zeppelin raid night before last in London, and it was most interesting and exciting. We were being thrilled at the pistol-morphine fight in 'Kick In' at the vaudeville theatre in the Strand, and strolled leisurely out to find everyone standing in the street, looking up in the air. The chasseur called: 'Run to the right. Zeppelins to the left!' — as though Zeppelins had the private entrée! Guns were going off over us, so we charged up an alley, only to find them worse at the other end. The smell of powder was exciting. We stood in a doorway, and Harry put an arm around me and I kissed him solemnly, and we waited to be exterminated. The sky got redder, and fire engines dashed by, and we thought we'd better move, so we started for Charing Cross. Then we remembered my maid whom we had left at the Washington Hotel, Curzon Street, and knew she must be terrorized, so near the crash of the big guns at the Park. We finally got there, and found all the hotel people in their nightgowns in the street. On the way we met a young officer invalided from the Front, and he said: 'What's the row?



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Zeppelins? What's the use of going to the Front when you can get this at home?' It was odd standing there in Trafalgar Square with such a racket overhead. We got a four-wheeler with one wheel half off and no tires and rattled to the station. Everyone was out in nightgowns all over the street. Opposite the Carlton Club, in a doorway, a man in an old-fashioned nightshirt was standing with a candle in his hand. At the station hundreds of us stood on a dark, narrow platform, with only the *crème de menthe* and maraschino cherry lights on the rails for light and now and then a blast of searchlight blinding us, while the guns shook the roof. At 12.15 they said there'd been an accident on the line and there'd be no more trains, so we stumped back to the Washington and spent the night wondering if we'd be blown up. The people there had all *seen* the Zeppelin. They said it 'looked like a train in the sky.' It was a tremendously exhilarating experience. Yesterday I went all over the damaged area — there's not a pane of glass left in Theobald's Road (W.C.) nor Leather Lane, nor Wood Street. Lots of houses roofless, but few signs of fire. Five people in a bus going into the Liverpool Street Station were killed.

The other day a man who had been ten



## RUSSIAN PRISONERS IN GERMANY

months in a German prison, dined with us. Every night in prison he thought would be his last, as they often threatened to shoot them at dawn. What weighed on him most seemed to be the remembrance of the Russian prisoners, harnessed to the huge German munition wagons, stumbling through the snow, lost to all semblance of humanity. This captain is only twenty-six, pink and white and brown, but with eyes that have now that secret look. At the Front they call most of the titled women — there for adventure — ‘Hot Cross Nurses,’ he said.

This morning when I told my maid that there was news of a planned German invasion, she put my breakfast tray down methodically and said, ‘Shall we prepare for death, Madam?’

### *Dogs in Alaska*

Nome, Alaska, *October 14, 1915*

Early in September my racing partner ‘Scotty’ Allan had a cable in code from Lieutenant Haas of the French Army asking ‘Scotty’ to be prepared to have a lot of dogs rounded up for him when he arrived in Nome to secure about a hundred for use in winter warfare in the North of France, or in the French Alps. We had sold all

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

of our young dogs, as 'Scotty' has been very ill this entire summer with pleurisy and its after effects, and the doctors told him he could not race this next year, and possibly never again. We were just wondering what we had better do with the kennel, when this message came from René Haas, who was Vice-Consul here for France for a number of years, and a great friend of ours. He left last year to join his colors, and last winter saw the inefficiency of horses, mules and motors where the soft snow makes a heavy weight a severe drawback.

He told what could be done with dogs, and I believe had one or two with him, and so this summer they sent him up here to get the best he could secure for messenger and carrier service in certain districts. Inside of twenty-four hours Lieutenant Haas and 'Scotty' had one hundred and six fine dogs, and in a day or two more had the sleds, equipment, harness and three tons of dried salmon for food for their journey.

He did not sell any of the Veterans who have won laurels for us in the big races; they are pensioned for life. But their sons and grandsons went to the Front, with many others from here. I was much more reconciled to seeing our young teams go in this way than to have sold them here,

## ALASKAN DOGS FOR FRANCE

either to racing rivals who were very keen for them or as freighters where their lives would probably be hard. As it is, all of our dogs will be kept together in teams, and René Haas says the dogs and animals in the service are most kindly treated. In fact, he says that the dogs are all pets, and have the best of it all the way through.

Not only did the dogs go, but 'Scotty' and two other dog experts went with René as far as Quebec to see them safely aboard a liner for France. At Quebec they are to meet many other dog teams from all over Canada.

The day the dogs sailed from Nome was a wonderful one. It was quite a dramatic occasion. The whole lot, one hundred and six, all attached to one tow-line of three and a half inch cable, three hundred and fifty feet long, went through the main street of Nome. The whole town was out, of course, to see the War Dogs off for the Front. As it happened, a Pathé Weekly moving-picture man was here with his camera, on his return from a trip to Siberia, and he got the whole thing in film. So about the time you get this, or later, you may see the episode face to face in Boston.

That it had a certain importance more than

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

just local, was proved by the fact that dispatches from German sources were received here in code, about the time 'Scotty' had his message from René, detailing the whole plan. Naturally the dogs were guarded day and night here, and will be till they arrive at their destination. With cipher messages about our pups, and guards over the corral and kennel, we began to feel as if we had quite an international importance, and that from a mining camp in the Arctic we were being changed to a camp at the front.

### *Escape from a German Prison*

From an American living in London.

London, *December 10, 1915*

A Canadian officer ——— dined with me last night and his story, though long, will bear repeating, as it is the most remarkable I have ever listened to. He was born a Dane and spent the greater part of his life trapping and hunting big game, of late years, in North-West Canada. He joined the Canadian army at the outbreak of war and was in all the desperate fighting in which the Canadians participated at the first gas attack and after. The story perforce loses much through the absence of his own way of

## PLANNING ESCAPE FROM PRISON

talking in quick short sentences. I will do the best I can.

‘I was captured last April near Ypres. Two minutes before I was taken I would not have thought it possible. The Germans were coming on in close formation for the tenth time. A shell went off next me and its concussion knocked me out. When I came to I was unwounded, but I was a prisoner too. They took me to a good camp near the Austrian border. There were about three hundred of us, Canadians, Russians, French and English. They gave us good food and enough of it. We had a tennis court and playing fields. We used to play football, baseball, cricket and all kinds of games.

‘Five minutes after I arrived I began to plan how to escape. I invented six plans of escape. Soon I found two Russian officers followed me. One was always near by saying, “Have a drink,” or, “Have a cigarette.” It was easy to see they were spies, put in by the Germans to watch us. I took them into my confidence and told them one of my plans. I had six, it did not matter. Of the money sent us by friends, they gave us twenty marks a week for pocket money. But we could charge extra food and clothes to our

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

accounts. I charged everything and kept the money. When early winter came, I had two hundred and fifty marks, quite a little money in Germany. I arranged with my Russian friends to escape on Thursday. They let me alone after that. They thought they had me. I escaped on Tuesday.

‘It took me seven hours. Sentries were all about and a high wire fence with meshes six inches square ran about the camp. It had arc lamps along it and barbed wire at intervals and on the top. After the evening roll-call, when it was dark, a friend lowered me into a little well in the main yard. It was only just big enough, and he put the heavy iron cover on after I was inside. I waited hours and then started to get out. The cover was terribly heavy and I had to be absolutely quiet. But I got my thumbs between it and the stone-work and lifted it up gradually. I watched the sentries through the crack, and, moving quickly when their backs were turned, I got out. I got into another building which was the stables. I knew it was empty and it had a window near the fence. I gained this window, hung out a rope ladder I had made and got down. I was now very near the fence. One of the arc lights was right over me.



## OVER THE FENCE

I waited close to the building for hours watching two sentries walking. They would not see me if I did not move. It all depended on timing. For one second in their beat both their backs were turned. I watched and watched. I studied the fence. I moved my pack, the things in my pocket, my food and my hat, to where I could pull them through the fence after I had got over. After a long time I got my chance and went over in about fifteen seconds. It was twelve feet high, but I used the meshes as a ladder. I lay still, full in the light, but behind the post that held it. And then they began to change guard. I lay there while they walked between me and the wall of the house with the rope ladder hanging out of its window. They never saw me and they never saw the ladder. I cannot tell why. I pulled my things through, and moving quickly at intervals, when both sentries' backs were turned, got out of the light zone and got away. In all that escape I did not move much, but when I did I moved awful quick and I didn't make any noise. I was not a big-game hunter for nothing.

'During the months in camp I had planned I would have to go through Germany without passports. I decided I was a Swede who had been working, first in America and later in Switzer-



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

land, on small contracts with a German partner. When war broke out my German partner joined the army. He had all our papers and took mine with him. I was trying to get back to Sweden. I had been sick and had lost some of my memory. I told this story so often during my wanderings that I almost came to believe it. My wife was in Sweden. I had a letter from her in my pocket. Of course I had written it to myself. I like to write letters to myself. It is so cheap. No stamps. In the letter my wife said she had not heard from me since Switzerland, and didn't know where I was. I never had to show this letter, but if I had I think it might have got me off. It is always good to be prepared even in the smallest details. I wrote other letters to myself and left them torn up in waste-paper baskets. They showed I meant to escape and run for the Swiss border. It was near by. I had a beard. I borrowed a razor the day before I escaped. But I never used it. They would look for a clean-shaven man. Every detail I thought of. The trail I left was such a mixture of truth and falsehood that I knew I would get a good start.

‘Once over the fence I went three or four miles straight towards the Swiss border. Then I rested and ate, carefully scattering the biscuit crumbs

## THE JOURNEY ACROSS GERMANY

to show the place. Here I also "lost" two post-cards and a letter. They showed I was making for Switzerland. This done, I struck off, away from the Swiss border and started on my long journey across Germany. I knew they would never believe I would go this way. It was impossible. I had a long German pipe and I wound my muffler around my neck. I had on my regular khaki uniform, but I had carefully taken all the straps and buckles away. It had leather buttons. It looked like an ordinary tourist's suit. Several people asked me about it. I said it had been given me by a man I had done work for in Switzerland. He was English. I didn't know where he had got it.

'At first I stuck to the roads. The peasants spoke to me. I answered hoarsely, but told them the Doctor had forbidden me to talk. I pointed to my muffler. I had a terrible throat. As I went on I saw the safest thing was to talk to everyone. With many men I gossiped and told my story. Over and over again I told it until they were tired. Sometimes I told it to women. They would almost cry. So would I. Being born a Dane, I have always known German a little. In the camp I had learned it fairly well. My accent was like a man from Schleswig-Holstein.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

'I had no papers, but I was only asked for them twice. Once I came on a man gathering nuts. He was a local policeman. He asked at once if I had my papers. "Yes, yes," I said, patting my breast pocket. Then I asked him if they had much snow. Oh, they had a lot. Did I come from the North? I told him "Yes." He thought so from my speech. Were there many nuts this year? A great many — but suddenly again — Where were my papers? I replied with still another question. Had the crops there been good? Oh, yes, very good. And then I asked more questions, many of them. We talked and got acquainted. He gossiped on about the neighbourhood. I overstayed my welcome. I bored him. Finally I moved on, but he gave me a handful of nuts when I left. He forgot about the papers. I was too evidently of the country. Another time I went to an inn for food. I sat down, but a man had seen me go in. He had charge of the rural guard. He came up and wanted my papers. I was a traveller. I had my papers all right, but would he have some beer? Oh, yes. We got some. I ordered cigars. We sat down to have a talk. I smoked my cigar fast until there was a long ash. Then I pointed out of the window and asked what was that on

## THE JOURNEY ACROSS GERMANY

the road. He looked and went to the window to see better. I flicked my ash into his beer and stirred it round. This mixture is fatal. They use it to shanghai sailors in the ports. We both drank. We had more beer and we talked and talked. He was a good fellow. He got drunk. He went away full of benevolence. I was all right — a fine chap. He never thought of my papers again.

‘I went on, a tramp, sleeping where I could, mostly in the open. I came to Frankfurt. There I learned that I could travel on the train and perhaps not be asked for my papers. This was good enough for me. I took a train and went a little way. Then I got out and walked. Then the train again and so on. I was making for Berlin. Once while walking I went up the side of a little reservoir to fill my water-bottle. It was foolish, for of course the reservoir was guarded. A man challenged. I asked him what he wanted. Another joined him. They were both unarmed. I asked again what they wanted. They did not answer, so I went straight at them. They ran. Then I, too, turned and ran. I knew they would get others and follow. They caught up with me as I was filling my water-bottle at a well in front of a farm. I stepped into the hedge

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

near a big tree. They knew I was near by. I picked up a stone and threw it over their heads into the hedge on the other side of the road. They turned and fired at the noise, for they had guns now. I shook a sapling beside me and stepped behind the big tree. They fired again, but it was dark and I got away across country. On I went until far behind I heard dogs. I know about dogs. On my map I saw a river lay several miles to my right. I bore for it, running in big overlapping circles. Dogs, when following thus, come often to a cross-road in the scent, when a trail lies so. They cannot follow quickly if at all. I got to the river, went in and swam across. The wet did not matter. I had been drenched for days sleeping in the open. It rained all the time. I went a little further and lay down to get some sleep. I could only sleep an hour or so, as I got cold then and woke up. I used to go this way for days. Walk, and walk, get warm, sleep an hour until the cold woke me, walk some more, and sleep again. Soon I came to a village. I got some new boots here and some new socks. I changed my shirt. I wanted to kill my scent. I could have got new clothes in Frankfurt or in this village. But I had told my friends in the camp I would get through in khaki. I would do it.

## IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

‘After this I kept off the roads except when I went by train. I got near Berlin and took a local train into it. On the platform were many men looking and looking at the passengers as they got out. I went up to one and asked him questions. I asked questions of some of the others, too. Anyone who looked at me I questioned. But Berlin is unhealthy and I only stayed there a day. I was in khaki, though.

‘I travelled for the Danish border and came to Schleswig-Holstein. This used to belong to Denmark, my old country, though Canada is my country now. Even the little children still speak Danish. The people will never forget. They hate the Germans. I was walking now. I had to ask the way often. I noticed some of the houses had flag poles on them or in the yard in front. I thought to myself these would be Germans. The houses with no flag poles belonged to those who could not fly the Danish flag and would not fly the German flag. Therefore they would not fly any. I gossiped and asked questions. This was so. It was safe to ask the way and to beg food of houses with no flag poles.

‘One dark stormy night I came to the frontier. I did not know it until I stumbled over a sleeping sentry. If he had waked quickly, I would have



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

cursed him and threatened to report him for being asleep on duty. This means death. But he woke slowly and I got away to one side. He took out his electric torch and shone it about, but not near me. He settled down to sleep again. I took off my boots and hung them round my neck. I put on an extra pair of socks and felt my way on. I came to a wire and as I touched it a bell rang. It only just rang, but a sentry came up on the run. There were trenches running parallel with the wires and I jumped into the one behind me, went a few steps and lay still. Another sentry came. They looked about a little, then talked and decided it must be the wind. I watched my chance and got through the wire. There were thirty-five wires like this, but only the first had a bell. At one place I had to pass a sentry walking parallel to the direction I must go. I watched and saw he was a good sentry. He walked straight, never looking to the right or left. He passed me and I walked right behind him with no sound. I have not hunted all my life for nothing. When it came nearly time for him to turn — I had watched and knew the place — I stepped into a ditch at the side. He turned and went by me. I got out and went on. This happened with two sentries. It is lucky



## SAFE IN DENMARK

they were well trained. I could not have done it with novices, who would look around, as they walked. They would have seen me behind them.

'I got into Denmark that night through the sentries and the thirty-five wires. Perhaps I wasn't glad! Then I went to Sweden and to Norway and by ship to Newcastle. I reported to the authorities. I went to see the King yesterday morning and told him all the story. I saw Queen Alexandra in the afternoon and told her. I gave her some of my photographs dressed in the clothes I wore with my pipe in my mouth and my muffler and my coat on. Every day I thought I would get no further. But I was never nervous. When the mind is made up one can only act. There is nothing to be nervous about.'

Major —— says that everywhere in Germany the people were evidently profoundly affected by the war and they were nearly all in mourning. I gathered, however, that he did not find much disposition to stop and that food was plentiful and likely to remain so.

I cannot convey the confidence his manner bred or the brains, resource and physical ability he fairly radiated.

# LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

## *Christmas Day in the Trenches*

From a Canadian officer.

*December 26, 1915*

DEAR FATHER: —

Thanks awfully for your letter of the 7th, which I received yesterday (Christmas Day). I am feeling fine and fit and, except for the rotten weather conditions, pretty comfortable.

We came into the trenches on Christmas Eve, and the Huns were more than active that night. However, we got into the trenches without a casualty. All night the Germans kept up an incessant rifle and machine-gun fire, and we thought we were in for a hot time, but towards morning the firing died down, and at about 8 A.M. ceased altogether. Then we saw an extraordinary sight. The Germans jumped up on their parapet, all along the line as far as we could see, and shouted 'Merry Christmas' to us, and in quite a number of cases came right out into 'no man's land' and waltzed about, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. Our trench is about fifty yards from the Germans, and two Germans right opposite us, came out halfway across from us and shouted for somebody in our trench, to meet them halfway. As it was against orders, we had

## CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES

to forbid any man leaving, but one man got away before we could stop him, and went over to them. They had quite a conversation, and we obtained quite a lot of useful information. They both said 'The Kaiser no damn good.' This remark was made by several Germans along the line. Needless to say they were *not* Prussians. Some of our trenches on the right, seeing this man go out, thought permission had been given to do so, and several started to leave the trench. I saw what they were going to do, so I climbed over our parapet, and ran across the open to the other trench to stop them. This overland route is absolutely impossible to use by day, as it brings you to within forty yards of the German trench. But as I expected, although only forty yards from me, they never made the slightest move to be unfriendly, and allowed me to reach the trench. It was really extraordinary; not a shot was fired at us, and they knew we were trying to keep our men in, and yet didn't interfere with us. They threw cigarettes over to our trench, and the man who went out gave the Germans a packet of 'Alf a mo' Kaiser' cigarettes. All the overtures of friendliness came from the Germans, who fearlessly took a chance and trusted to us not shooting them.

1916-1917

*The Battle of Jutland*

From an officer to his father describing the Battle of Jutland.

June 4, 1916

I have seen a real naval battle, and it was not in the least like what I had expected, but it was rather soul-shaking. I had always drawn a mental picture of the two fleets, in line ahead, pounding away at each other, with the light cruisers looking on, seeing all that was happening from van to rear and everything obvious as a cricket match. But as it was, vast forms loomed up out of the mist, firing like Billy-o at other ships, that were perfectly invisible.

But I remember lots of things. I saw the Invincible — my old Invincible — blow up right alongside of us, hardly a mile off, a great crimson rose of flame a hundred feet high and perhaps two hundred broad, that rose leisurely, contemptuously, with an awful majestic dignity to a good four hundred feet; at its very top an immense baulk of timber or ship's plating. Then the deep red faded out and there remained only a black

## THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

pall below, merging in the general pall that the many ships' smoke at full speed was creating, and above, a new billowy white cloud, added to the others in the sky. Eighteen minutes later a gentle shower like the first of a snowstorm, fell, or rather came drifting down upon us.

That was the essence of shattered matter: the following is the essence of triumphant spirit.

A little British destroyer, her midships rent by a great shell meant for a battle cruiser, exuding steam from every pore, able to go ahead, but not to steer, coming down diagonally across our line — unable to get out of anybody's way, likely to be rammed by any of a dozen ships, her syren whimpering — 'Let me through! Make way!' — her crew fallen aft, dressed in life belts ready for her final plunge — and cheering wildly — as it might have been an enthusiastic crowd when the King passes! Perfectly MAGNIFICENT! Thank God, I am an Englishman! The Invincible had just blown up, the Queen Mary ten minutes earlier. She had just been winged — that was her reply — perfectly spontaneous cheering from her crew!

I remember, too, dashing out again to strafe destroyers, and finding their whole line of battle instead. That was exciting! But it was one of

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

life's cherished moments when we had returned to the fold, and a thumping great battleship made a signal, 'Who is firing at you?' and we replied, 'The Enemy's Battle Fleet'! Rien que ça!

Finally the enemy signalled his retirement, the day done, with a really lovely star-shell, which quite warmed my heart towards him — I, who have always loved fireworks! After all the furious deep red displays of pyrotechnics we had been treated to for over three hours, this gentle, cool, pure white, silent Star of Bethlehem was quite like the Spirit of Peace coming to brood over us.

And for you at home, who feel badly about the lost men, remember that we are not quite like the Army, where almost every man nowadays is a simple volunteer, come out to do his bit and save the world. We are real professionals — we rejoice at the opportunity given us to put in some good work at our own job, and to justify our existence, so we are not quite in the same category as the poor fellows who have jumped out of civil life and forsaken all to follow the bloody path of Duty. We were sacrificed years since on the altar, not of Hymen but of Mars. The sacrifice is but consummated in the case of our dear fellows on my old Invincible.

It is a fine life while one is in it. If I am se-

## KITCHENER'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

lected next time, why, you will be sorrier than I. For I at least shall have 'seen the Goddess,' and albeit she is fickle and her back is not altogether beautiful, I am prepared to chance her frown, if I chance to see her face and her smile. Life is a gamble, this particular life the greatest gamble of all, which makes it so attractive.

I fear I am developing into a fighting man!

### *Kitchener's Memorial Service*

From Lieutenant Donaldson Lizars Savage, of Montreal.

Brompton Barracks  
Chatham, England  
June 11, 1916

DEAR DADDY,

We may send a body of troops as Guard of Honor to the Memorial Service for Kitchener, but we are not sure. Anyway, I have been chosen to go as the only sub. I do hope we go, as I will never get such another chance in a lifetime. I have been drilling with a party of picked men for the last couple of days. I did not believe there were such men in the corps, about every third man has a Distinction Medal, Russian, French or English. The shortest man in the lot is five feet ten, and you should just see them march. Of



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

course I am absolutely scared green, but Captain French, the Adjutant, is in charge, so things are sure to go off all right if it goes off at all. Just think, in about a month and a half I hope to go to Aldershot; and you have nearly all riding there, which will be lots of fun. You should see me in my swell new field boots and undress. I had to get everything new on account of this service.

*Sunday, June 18, 1916*

I suppose this has been one of the most eventful weeks I have ever had. In my last letter I told you I was training with a Guard of Honor for Kitchener's Memorial Service. Well, we did not have a Guard of Honor, but twelve R.E. Officers and forty men went up to represent the corps. I went with the men and I believe I was the only sub. in the place. Saint Paul's was packed absolutely to the doors. There were over ten thousand people who applied for tickets, so you see how lucky I was. Captain French took the men up and let me bring them back alone. We simply marched straight in and took our seats right up in the front. There was a Field Marshal and an Admiral of the Fleet sitting right in front of me. I never knew there were so many big bugs in the Army before.

## KITCHENER'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

The King and Queen passed right by and sat quite a bit in front. The music was great. The R.E. band had fifteen drums there, and I never heard such a noise in my life. I thought the place was falling down about my ears. To finish up, two R.E. buglers sounded the last post and the notes echoed through the domes about five minutes after they had stopped. The only drawback was the weather. It was pouring rain when we went up, and although the rain stopped during the morning, it was cold and miserable.

I got the men back quite all right and all the fun was over, but I will not forget it for a long time. Our new instructor in Field Works, who I thought the biggest boob on earth, has turned out trumps, and was presented with the Military Cross the other day. There are about ten Canadians here now, one by the name of Davis, a Montrealer, is awfully decent. He has been out at the Front some time and came back gassed.

Well, I will have to stop now. I hope you are having better weather than we are having.

Love to all.

Your loving son

DON

The writer was killed in France November 15, 1916; aged twenty years.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

### *Stealing Enemy Wire*

From Allan Routledge, Canadian; joined the Forty-Second Battalion, R.H.C., August, 1914.

July, 1916

We have just come out of the line for a rest and are rather thankful, as things are rather lively at present and we had a fairly hard tour.

We are all in excellent health and spirits, though, and the weather is still keeping fine. We have got it all over the Boche now — and had his goat nicely. Amongst other strafes a Sergeant and myself crawled out and cut about sixty feet of their wire and got a rope out from our trench, passed it through their wire, brought the end of the rope back to our trench and gave the order to heave! Well! I never laughed so much in my life. It was lovely! At the first pull, the wire came together with a crash, then broke free and came rolling steadily towards our line! Their sentry yelled out 'Hey!' when the wire started to move — it must have scared the life out of him! (We were cutting it about four yards away from him.) Then hell was let loose. Numerous guttural exclamations of distinct enemy origin were heard all along their line — they could not understand what was coming off. To

## STEALING ENEMY WIRE

see one's wire suddenly start off at a terrific speed towards the other trenches is rather startling.

They put up about a thousand flares and bombed the devil out of their own wire for half an hour. They also swept unoccupied (by that time we were in our trench) No Man's Land with terrible machine-gun fire and rifle grenades. We certainly had their wind up. Our object was to produce moral effect! Daylight revealed their wire reposing gracefully in front of our parapet! We were lucky to get it off without a casualty, as it was quite a bright night. The wire made an awful row coming across — crashing into tree-stumps, shell-holes, etc. They must have 'stood to' all night!

I have got a new job now — bombing officer; it is pretty hard work, but you get right into the thick of it when anything starts.

I don't personally think it will be long before this war is over, but one can never tell. I don't think any of us will be annoyed to see its end.

The writer was wounded at Courcellette the 15th of September and died 23d of September, 1916; aged twenty-one years. He was mentioned in despatches by Sir Douglas Haig.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

### *Air Raid in London*

Clapton, London, *September 19, 1916*

Ah, dear Miss H. There is many an aching heart caused by this war and everything is so scarce and dear that you really do not know what to buy for the best. I thought I would go to the munition factory to help me out a bit. My husband did not like the idea of my going, but I told him that I could not manage on his money. He could see I could not, so I went on a shift of eight hours. I made shell-heads and did them all right, but they worried me so they put me cleaning shells at five an hour, but I have to do night work one week and Sunday work.

Twice I have been on night work when there has been an air raid. It was so terrible it made me ill, and I had to give it up. As I write this, every minute I expect to hear the guns to tell us they are here again. They were here a week ago last Saturday. We had just gone to bed and in a nice sleep when we were awakened by the terrible banging of guns, and searchlights. We knew what it was and were too frightened to dress. We wondered if they were going to throw their bombs on our house. We got into the street, where some were screaming and shrapnel was

## A ZEPPELIN BROUGHT DOWN

flying everywhere, but we did not heed it while we watched the huge Zeppelin. Of a sudden there was such shouting and hurraing you might have thought it was Peace proclaimed, but, no! The whole of London looked on fire, for an airman had brought it down and it had caught fire, and we could see it trickling down all alight, a beautiful sight.

There were cycles and cars and motor-cycles tearing away for dear life in the direction where it came down and we went to bed feeling safe again.

### *A Ruined Countryside*

From a British officer. Sent by a friend in France to Mrs. Grant.

*November 21, 1916*

I am really having rather a wonderful time of it — from our point of view, of course — though at times one calls it 'rotten,' and without any conscience bite either.

You have seen the papers lately, I suppose, and it is not for me to start describing places and actions after you have read all our Press had to say about it — only, you see, those newspaper chaps are catering for a very large public — and one has to be careful, and things have to

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

be toned down to a nice, quiet hue that will not spoil the Brown-Smiths' breakfast appetite. Yes, the ghastly, the horrible, maddeningly horrible, scenes are left out.

One hears of many shell-holes, of 'intense' bombardments, after which the village of so and so was taken — I just wonder what, for instance, the above actually conveys to the brain of the man or woman at home — or even of the fighting man who has not been in any real thing yet. Just listen — could you believe me if I told you that a certain place, the capture of which was made known in the usual manner, describing it as a village, does not present to the eye a single whole visible portion of wall, or heap of stones, or anything, indeed, showing that a village was once there? I have been over a square mile of ground of which not one inch had been left untouched by explosives.

Have you heard what an Oberleutnant said to one of our chaps after the last rush? 'If you think you can laugh at us for surrendering, go and stand for forty-eight hours in our trenches and let your artillery open fire!'

A certain valley is a most remarkable representation of Dante's Valley of the Damned — a river, once gently flowing in a sinuous line



## A VALLEY OF THE DAMNED

amongst trees, is now a succession of deep pools, often, too often of a reddish hue — trees — only a few stumps, scarred, scorched — perhaps the most desolate and maimed-looking things in the whole scenery — a railway — well, you do see portions of rails here and there, but — and over it all a silvery, intense moonlight.

As you come down the valley, you face certain heights — *they* are there — and they know that you — thousands of you must be coming up this road — *you* know *they* know it — and yet somehow you do not seem to care. The whole thing is too eery, too ghostly, to leave room for any definite sentiment of fear.

Suddenly, one, two, three grapes of fire seem to drop from nowhere in front of you, and a little, very little after, three sheafs of flame dart up from the road, and the short spell of deadly silence is broken by the sound of explosions. Then, somewhere on our left, a sixty-pounder has his say — then the whole battery — then the whole hundreds of guns massed in that neighborhood. The enemy's position seems aflame, so quick is the succession of explosions — rockets, flares — like frantic calls for help — arise in quick succession. Even to the least imaginative, a picture of despair and terror suggests itself in

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

that trench — how can they possibly live through it — A shell has landed on one of their rocket dumps and a multitude of flares fly asunder, throwing the whole valley into a ghostly white light.

A dead man, lying very quietly as if asleep, is there, quite alone. I had not noticed him, but somehow I do not feel the shock one would expect — he seems so peacefully at rest, so detached from the surrounding horror —

Then there is the smell — It partakes of burnt wood, of very strong vinegar of wine, and of a peculiar acidness of a chemical origin, left in the air by the different explosions.

The bombardment goes on, and we advance. Our officer is a wonderful chap, and we six, out for great things, feel we can trust him. It is fine to be able to trust your leader as fully as we do him.

Wearily, slowly we advance — a last pause in a tumbled-in German dug-out — a last, breathless race across five hundred yards of volcanic and chaotic ground, and we have reached our point.

I cannot tell you where, nor when, nor what, we were trying for — but it was great — great, with a sort of sublime horror that makes you think again and again of the prophet's words, 'The abomination of desolation.'

At first, when I came out here, I used to love to

## A RUINED COUNTRYSIDE

think how quickly all those smashed-in farms would arise again, gay and clean and alluring to the eye — now, I shiver when I think of those who have lived and loved in those little French hamlets, and who will come back, and who will cry out: — ‘But it is not possible! This cannot be our village! Where are the houses? The old well, the little grove — where are they?!’

When I look back upon some of the sights I have seen, a sort of fear creeps over me — this is going too far — this war is becoming a thing of the devil — men are touching, yea, trespassing upon rights they have not. One cannot level, destroy, pound to atoms a whole countryside, and the people therein, without being called to account for it. Pray God forgive us; perhaps He will, but what of those who are at the bottom of all this horror? Can even He, the all-forgiving one, look with mercy upon their deeds? I am not speaking of the men who have fallen, they are all right, but this long, long list of names brings desolation to thousands of homes — what of that? Shall we, if we are spared, be able to resume life as we left it in 1914? — Can things be the same? I cannot believe it, I cannot.

God! what a lesson! And at what a cost! And what an incentive to those left to benefit under

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

it. Oh, yes! Good must come out of it — God surely would not allow this butchery of the leading human race, if He did not see beyond it a wealth of good. I must feel sure of that — it helps so —

‘ Adieu, my dear fellow, may you, at least, have a decent Xmas home — and spend yet a few weeks in Merrie England. Keep to Windsor for the winter — a jolly sight healthier spot than ‘all these ‘ere ‘courts and ‘villes round ‘ere,’ as ‘our Bert’ would say, and come and join us in spring for the Grand Finale!

There is no ‘strafe’ tonight, so I am going to try and give my jaded brain as luxurious a slumber as you can wish. I am staying at a bakery, my apartment consisting of a most spacious cellar, with unlimited supply of rats, cats and other minor, but nevertheless exceedingly objectionable, nuisances!

### *Found on the Body of a Dead German*

On the body of a young Bavarian soldier, killed in the recent battle in Champagne, was found this pathetic letter to his mother.

MY DEAR MAMA,

For three months we have been in the battle. Heavens, what is it all for? The greatness of the

## A DEAD GERMAN TO HIS MOTHER

Fatherland, the glory of the Kaiser, or some motive of that kind? If so, it is, after all, a small thing, and neither united Germany nor our respected Kaiser had need of all this bloodshed. I cannot tell you, my dearly-beloved mother, what pictures of hell pass ceaselessly before my eyes. I seem to be living in a red dream and among flames. Of what use to me will have been my long studies and my hopes to make you happy in your old age? To die miserably for a mysterious cause. Thousands of us all are in this case. Good and faithful comrades of mine who, like me, asked only to be allowed to live in joy and work, I have seen fall in the hail of lead and iron or perish of cold and almost of hunger. It is no longer possible to win this war. My last thought will be of you. Good-bye till eternity, my sweet, darling mother.

OTTO KOENIGSTEIN

The letter was found on the lad's body, not by one of his comrades, but by the French. It has been despatched to its destination through a neutral country.

### *Theodore Roosevelt on Canada*

The National Allied Bazaar was held in Boston from December 9 to 20, 1916. Mrs. Robert Grant was chairman of the Canadian Booth. She wrote to

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Mr. Theodore Roosevelt and to Mr. Taft and asked if they would not write to her some expression of appreciation of Canada's part in the World War.

They both responded and their letters were bought by a member of the committee and later given to the University of Toronto.

*November 25, 1916*

MY DEAR MRS. GRANT,

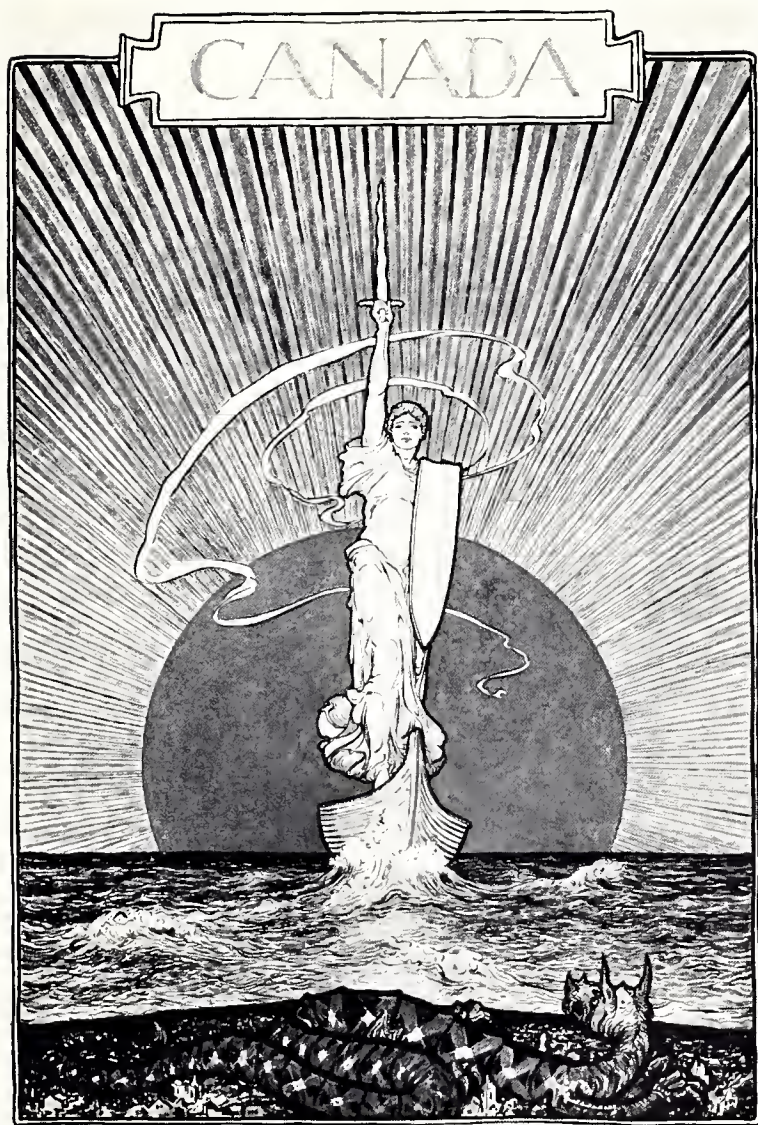
I wish you all possible success with the Canadian Booth of the Allied Bazaar.

Canada has played a great and noble part in the World War; showing that combination of high idealism and masterly efficiency which must exist in any people that is to play a mighty part in the world. Neither quality is enough in itself; and Canada has proved her possession of both qualities.

No nation achieves greatness except at the cost of labor and suffering except by showing the power to dare and do and die at need.

No woman is fit for anything but the position of a slave if she does not raise her boy to be a soldier whenever his country calls; and no man is fit for citizenship in a free, self-governing nation unless he possesses the high spiritual quality and the trained physical prowess and hardihood which will make him proudly eager to fight in his





THE COMING OF CANADA  
A poster by Huger Elliott





## ROOSEVELT ON CANADA

country's cause and thoroly competent to do that fighting in efficient manner. Canada has shown that her sons and daughters belong to these types. Through their valor and devotion she has won an honorable position, a high position, in history, and at the council board of nations.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

### *Air Raid at Norfolk Crescent, London*

*September, 1917*

The moonlight raid, however, was the real thing with a vengeance. I was spending the night in the country with my children, but my wife was in the thick of it, and I cannot give you a better idea of what it was like at its worst than to recount her experiences. She was working late at the American Y.M.C.A. Eagle Hut in the Strand. They received warning at about 11.30 that a raid was expected, but she decided to brave the dangers of the open and started home at about the same time. She had not gone far before a policeman requested her to take cover, which she did, finding herself in an office hallway with two policemen and a gentleman who picked up

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

cigar butts for a living. She waited here for a time, but, having exhausted the conversation of her companions, became bored and, in spite of the policeman's remonstrances, decided to resume her journey home. They could then hear the buzz of aeroplanes and the anti-aircraft guns. She walked to the Tube Station and, finding the ticket windows and lifts both closed, forced her way down the stairs, past the refugee families who crowded every step. The trains were still running and she arrived at her station without further adventure except laughing at a Cockney who had been roused to such a pitch by the excitement that he entertained the whole car with remarks on near-by individuals and their attitude towards the raid. He kept calling one female, who had some large, strange bird in her hat, 'Florence Nightingale,' and hoped her hat would not be hit by a bomb. Also constantly he repeated, 'Serve my supper in a coal hole tonight.' The English either get panicky or are roused out of their usual state of torpor into a talkative brightness by unusual excitement or danger.

On reaching our house my wife, who was alone in the house, the caretaker being ill, went to bed, but had not been there five minutes before she heard again the buzzing of aeroplanes. It came

## AN AIR RAID ON LONDON

nearer and nearer, and finally became so extraordinarily loud that she thought the machines must be British and went to the window to see if she could see them. She had no sooner looked out than the little Crescent on which we live was lit up as if by a flash of lightning, and the house rocked with the noise of a terrific explosion. My wife (to use her own words) covered her face with her hands and crouched in animal terror. An aerial torpedo had dropped and gone off about one hundred and fifty yards behind the house. My wife then started for the cellar, but had only gone a few steps toward her bedroom door when another terrific explosion occurred. A bomb had dropped on the house just across the Crescent from us. It was only about one hundred feet from our house, as we live near one of the points of the Crescent. Needless to say my wife kept right on for the cellar.

When the banging and buzzing had ceased, she sallied forth into the street in her dressing-gown to see what she could see. It was a warm moonlight night, and all the neighbours were out in similar garb looking at the damage. It turned out that the bomb had hit the back of the house opposite and gone through one of the bedrooms down into the cellar, where it killed the cook who

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

was sleeping there. Fire engines, wrecking lorries, and ambulances began coming and going. Once the crowd which had quickly collected scattered in a most laughable manner when a rumour ran through it that an unexploded bomb lay somewhere near. For a minute everyone ran for their lives. Their nerves were on edge.

Presently my wife started to re-enter our house, but to her horror found that she did not have her latchkey. It was not in her purse. She was locked out in the street in her dressing-gown! The neighbours were very kind and offered to take her in for the night, but she decided she would get into her own house by hook or crook. She summoned two policemen and they procured a ladder. One of them climbed to one of the upper windows, forced it, and, descending to the front door, let my wife in. In this way she finally went to bed for a second time, but she admitted the next morning when she told me this tale of adventure that she did not succeed in sleeping much. I am glad to say it all had no ill effects, which speaks well for her nerve. She now takes the same attitude as I do about air raids, for which I am glad, as I think she thought my recent desire to take cover immediately showed



DOLL DRESSED FOR THE FRENCH SOLDIERS'  
WIDOWS AND ORPHANS FUND BY A LIFE  
INMATE OF A REFORMATORY FOR WOMEN

The work is Irish crochet and shows the rose  
of England, the shamrock of Ireland, and the  
thistle of Scotland





## THE LIFER'S DOLL

lack of enterprise and curiosity, not to say a tendency towards downright fear.

### *The 'Lifer's' Doll*

A life prisoner contributes her mite to France!

The following letter from the Superintendent of the Reformatory for Women tells its own story:

'A Life woman in this institution sent me for my birthday a doll very charmingly clothed, with the accompanying note:

“I bought this doll with the intention of asking, if any of your friends were having a sale of work, would they try to sell it for the French Soldiers' Widows or Orphans' Fund. It won't realize much, but every mite helps. You will see by the little lady's dress that she represents the British Isles: Rose of England, Shamrock for Ireland and last but not least, the Thistle for Scotland.”

'The little frock is made entirely of Irish crochet which she herself had done. I was deeply touched at this effort on her part and deeply touched at the symbolism which she had in her mind and heart worked out. It seemed to me that people realizing in this time of crisis and deep emotion that a "Lifer," shut in from the world, was trying to contribute her mite, would reach

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

out to the appeal and make it possible for her gift to be something of value.'

Mrs. Grant had the doll photographed and the letter printed on the back of a card and then sold it for '25 cents.' Needless to say neither the photographer nor the printer charged anything for their work and the card was sold by friends in many parts of the country. She realized over \$1000, which Mrs. Grant sent to Mrs. Edith Wharton in Paris, who always spoke of her as 'The Wonder-Working Doll!'

1918-1919

*Americans in Training*

From an American Lieutenant.

France, *March 22, 1918*

DEAREST FAMILY,

As I sit here the guns are booming in the distance, and over my head there is an aeroplane which can be heard but not seen. In other words, dear family, I am at the front at last and expect to go up from these billets any day. You see I am doing as is always done in books, writing to the dear ones at home just before I go.

We left our training camp in the daytime, and after a hike we entrained in the dark and in perfect silence, for the Boche had bombed that place during the day. We then had to make an all-night hike, and it was the worst trip I ever took, bar none. We could not smoke or talk loud, the night was dark and wet, we could see star-shells shooting up every now and then, and last and worst of all, none of us had had practically any sleep for two nights. I swear, by the time we reached our destination I was seeing aeroplanes, shells, etc. We arrived in our camp

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

in the dark and the men were allowed to go to bed immediately and we officers followed them shortly. When I saw the star-shells go up, I imagined I saw 'No Man's Land' as plain as day and everything in that terrible land. It really brought to me more clearly than ever before that there is a war and the horrors of the same.

Yet here I am sitting in front of my quarters and have just finished eating a huge and very delicious Camembert cheese, also some of the officers have been making fudge — not exactly a warlike occupation — and the birds are singing in the trees, and the camp lies before me calm and serene; but also before me at the bottom of the hill runs a road and along this road is an endless procession of guns, infantry, ambulances, trucks, and the rest of the paraphernalia of war.

*March 28*

We are at last really on the big job of knocking the H out of Hun. At present I am sitting in the sun on top of my dugout with the guns ready to fire in front of me and a telephone at my elbow, waiting for word from my captain to fire. Altogether we have got a darn good battery. They are all rough-necks and thugs, but they sure can

## AMERICANS IN TRAINING

work and fire and love the life here. The only trouble is they think they are on some sort of a picnic and don't seem to realize they are in any danger.

*An hour later*

The balloons went down, so we have been trying to shoot up the Hun and the Hun in turn tried to get us. It gives the men a taste of the real thing, and I assure you the whistle of their shells is as unpleasant a noise as I ever heard. If we think it is unpleasant now, what word will we use when we get up into our regular place on the lines? Then will be the time I will wish I had been a good boy and not enlisted.

It is raining for the first time since we got here, and each side has put out the sign, 'Game called on account of rain'; at least it seems that way, for there has been practically no firing all day. You know they are sending about four officers a month from each regiment back to the States as instructors, but I don't want to leave until July anyway, for if I come back I want to be wearing a service stripe and six months in the zone of advance gets you one. I am not so particular about a wound chevron!

I am very thankful that we are at last through with our training and are starting to do some-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

thing worth while. It is going to take a long while, but we are going to win in the end without a doubt.

*March 29*

... We are attached to a French division and all our orders come through the French. Now we are still in quite a quiet sector and the French want to keep it so, but if we come in here and fire a lot of shots at the Boche, naturally the latter will get slightly annoyed and will retaliate in kind. Result — Americans may only fire a few shots. Oh! it's a great system, and you can imagine how it makes a bunch of impatient Americans feel. The men almost go crazy waiting. However, orders are orders and we must do as they say as long as we are under their command.

*April 9*

... Yesterday they found out where this battery is; at least that is what we think, as they dropped about eight shells all about us so that the fragments were flying around our heads like hail. However, no one was hit, and after the first shot a hasty retreat was made underground. I don't think that from now on the men are going to feel so safe or think that it is such a picnic here. We certainly celebrated Easter in fine

## CELEBRATING EASTER

style! We had a real battle that day. Oh! it was a great day, but we did have turkey and cranberry sauce, so that made up for a lot of backslips. However, it's a unique way of spending that Holy Day, shooting Germans on the Western Front. Great life!

I think in a few days I am going to be sent back to the billets for a rest. It will do me good, but I do hate to get away from here, for it is a fascinating game, especially when the whole battery is firing at once and all waiting for your word. Lots of love to you.

G. G.

*April 14, 1918.*

Special Orders. He was ordered to return to the United States to assist in the training of organizations there.

'The travel directed is necessary in the Military Service.'

### *In the Argonne*

Extracts from an American officer's diary.

*August sixteenth*

Got about one hour's sleep between runners and messages and telephone calls. The forward guns had been very badly shelled and some of the runners had to lie in shell-holes for hours before they could get through. I set out as soon



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

as it was light to visit my guns. I got up to the third platoon and they were getting it hot. This trench was shallow and knocked about by shell fire, and had no dugouts except a few that the Germans had blown up when they left. There was practically no real cover there at all, and they had been lying flat in the trench all night under very heavy fire. As I came along the trench, some of the boys said, 'Look out, he shoots a M.G. there'; so I ducked, and as I ducked old Fritz fired and the bullets went just too high. I went along the trench looking at my guns and talking to the boys. It was their first real shelling and they were scared all right, and I don't wonder. The shells were fairly plastering the whole sector. A big shell comes like an express train. If it is going past, you just hear her whistle; if she is going short, you just hear her explode; but if she is coming toward you, first she whistles, then she shrieks, then she roars, then the whole earth rocks, and you wonder if you are still alive. They are bad, by Jove, they are certainly bad, and it was bad there this morning. I had no idea I could get into a shell-hole so quick as I did one time when I was standing outside the trench looking for a machine-gun position and I heard that unmistakable increas-

## WHY GOOD YANKS FIGHT

ing scream of a shell that is coming close. Well, sir, I was in the shell-hole out of sight with a rapidity that would make a prairie dog sit up nights practising it. In the afternoon I heard that two of my best men were gone. Gosh, it made me feel bad. The first casualties in our battalion.

*September eighteenth*

War is a funny proposition. If the fellers that decided on going to war had to go first themselves, there would be a darn sight less of it. These boys in our company come from Erie — what do they know or care about the laws of 'visit or search'? What do they know or care about the right of Serbia or Albania or Poland? What do they know or what do they care about making the world safe for the democrats? The answer to all these questions is, 'not one continental Damn.' They are fighting because, in the first place, they were jolly well drafted and couldn't help themselves, and now they are pretty good sports about it and are more than ready to see it through. Personal feeling about Germany they have practically none. They fight like good Yanks because that's the sort of a cuss they are and they will do any darn thing they might be asked to do. They are going to

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

fight the Germans, but they would go after the French just about as willingly and the Tommies a good deal more willingly; as for that they would just as leave fight against Arkansas or North Carolina or any other darn country.

Uncle wrote for me to live a good Christian life that everyone can be proud of. I've been thinking it over and I can't quite dope it out. A Christian life — I've almost forgotten what it's supposed to be. It seems as I remember it that the first thing you were to do was to love your enemies. Love your enemies! Great Scott! I can't do that and try to kill them at the same time. I don't hate them, I admit, but love them! No, I can't do that, not so long as their machine-gunners wear Red Cross brassards on their arms, anyhow. I'm not going to turn the other cheek either, not so long as my pistol is loaded. As for taking no thought for my life or what I shall eat or drink or put on, I must say, I have little else on my mind, except mail from home. No, I don't believe my life is too Christian. I'm certainly not too proud of it myself, although I swear I can't see any way of improving the blooming thing.

## SAVING THE TRANSPORT

*October third*

This day has lasted for ninety-six hours more or less. We got orders just as we were preparing to go to bed to go into the attack, so we moved up into position just behind the front line. We bivouacked on the ground and got a little sleep, but as it drizzled a little and we were shelled a little and were scared a little, sleep was not too good. Our barrage came down early, and shortly after that we started forward. This warfare is quite open and we moved along the roads without transport. We came through —— which we took a couple of days ago, and God knows how they did it because it sits way up on a hill and looks absolutely impregnable. However, the Yanks took it, and today when we went through it it was a mess. We parked our transport much further forward than was safe, and the adjutant came running up shortly shouting above the roar of the guns, 'Spread that transport out, the place is being shelled.' I ran over to the limbers and told them to scatter out, and the words were hardly out of my mouth before a big shell hit within twenty yards of me, bowling one of my sergeants completely over twice and he got up unhurt! The transport scattered all right and went in all directions like chickens in

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

front of an automobile, and had hardly moved away before a shell dropped in the exact place where they had been. I went and told the captain. 'They are all scattered, sir,' I said, he answered, 'I'm hit,' and he certainly looked it. I think he thought he was killed, but it was the best wound I ever saw. A piece of the shell that had bowled over my sergeant had gone in the point of his shoulder and had inflicted the nicest blighty that ever a man hoped for. We tied him up and laid him in a trench, and later he went off to the dressing-station. After that the shelling got worse and we had to get down. I had a little bit of a trench and was snug as the proverbial bug. I went out some time later and went around to see how the men were getting on. They were scattered around in shell-holes and were getting on all right, although the shelling was hot. I saw one man lying down, and he was quite dead horribly mashed by a shell. Incidentally I almost got it myself a couple of times and twice flattened myself into the grass while the deadly ground shrapnel raked up the dirt around me. We stayed there all morning and finally got orders to move forward. Just as we started, a shell sailed over our heads and burst two hundred yards beyond. I knew instinctively

## SHELL-FIRE

that the next would be shorter and hurried them all I could, and just barely got the tail of the column clear of the place before the next one came in with a crash just where we had been. We dug ourselves in some five hundred yards in front of the German front line. We were in a wood and had one infantry in front of us. We had barely got ourselves out when the devil went loose in the woods. Each man had dug a little trench for himself just big enough to lie down in. I don't remember ever having such a bad time. The shells hit everywhere but right on my hole — and, by George, it was bad. Bang! Whang! Zip! Crash! Pow! Zow! Blooie! They would let up for a minute and you would take a deep breath and then they would start again. Towards evening I went forward to connect up with our infantry, and had not gone fifty yards before they pinned me to earth with enough shells to annihilate the British Army. I lay flat for half an hour. I finally got out to the edge of the woods and was promptly sniped at by the Germans, but they were poor shots and missed both times. The night ended in a furious barrage and quiet while both sides had some breakfast. We had wonderful luck and only had four men hit. I don't see how it was possible, as theoretically



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

nothing could live under fire like that, but we did. I moved my guns later, as I got an order saying that I was responsible for the left flank of the Division. I also moved my Headquarters and got into a half-destroyed German dugout. It wouldn't have stopped anything, but it increased my morale a lot. I now see why the ostrich puts its head in the sand, to increase its morale. We got shelled all right, and it's a wonder we didn't get blown in, but we didn't. At five minutes to five I got an order to send four guns forward with the infantry. I saw them go forward over the ridge, and as they went by I wished them good luck. They topped the crest and disappeared and then I heard the German machine guns open. The shelling was terrible all day. It was a miracle that the platoon was not wiped out. The Boche used a bit of gas on us, and it wasn't nice. The next morning we were taken out, and nobody was sorry. I think we have had as much concentrated Hell in those three days as is possible. We were all dead tired. We have been in the thick of it for almost two weeks. I was quite wrong about the Hun; there are plenty of them left and their tactics are admirable. They know the game better than we do, although man for man we can lick the



## PRESIDENT WILSON'S REPLY

spots out of them. Our rations have gotten up without fail. I have been promoted Captain.

*October eleventh*

President Wilson has replied to Prince Max's peace proposals. His reply is a masterpiece.

First, he wanted to know just exactly what the note meant.

Second, he wanted to know just exactly who had sent the thing.

Third, he wouldn't consider any proposals so long as the Germans held any land that they didn't properly own.

By George, it was great stuff, and just exactly the way everybody would have expressed themselves had they been able to express themselves.

I doubt if we have any peace for some time, but I fully believe that the end is near and that, as the French soldiers say, 'Le Boche Fini.'

*October eighteenth*

I don't remember speaking about the aerial activity in the last fight, but it is unbelievable. You see planes literally by the hundred and you see lots brought down. I saw three German planes brought down in half an hour. One came crashing down on top of a hill about one thousand

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

yards away. It stood on its nose with its tail in the air; we could see it very plainly on the skyline, and immediately an enormous crowd of Yanks gathered around looking for souvenirs, the worst darn fool thing I ever saw; there must have been a thousand in a crowd right on top of this hill, in the middle of the attack and in plain view of the Germans. The Germans immediately broke up the party by putting about ten shells into the group, which rather scattered them. Your Yank soldier is certainly an insatiable souvenir hunter.

I went into a near-by town the other day and bought a few things I needed and came home here again bumping over the roads on a flat tire, which we were too lazy to fix. This 'c'est la guerre' philosophy is most immoral. When the tire of the Ford goes flat, we say 'c'est la guerre,' and regarding women it's the same thing. Young wives elope with somebody else's husbands, forget to be true, and there is a general let-up all round. 'C'est la guerre,' what difference does it make?

Uncle keeps writing me about praying; he is certainly a very devout man. And he probably would be glad to know that I actually did pray once or twice during the last attack. It was

## PRAYER IN BATTLE

rather contemptible of me too. It is supposing too much to think that you can turn your back on God and expect him to listen to a prayer, an instinctive, involuntary, but nevertheless fervent prayer made while a particular shell is coming whistling down the wind directly towards you, but I prayed instinctively; I couldn't help it and so I find did everyone else. I'll wager that large calibre high explosive shells have caused more fervent prayer in the last four years than all the sermons that ever have been preached. No, it's no good; if you are going to pray when you hear 'them big shells,' you ought also to pray at other times; you ought to pray for the good of your soul and for the welfare of others and all that sort of thing. It would be surely contrary to all fairness to be a pagan like I am all the time except when I am scared green. I think everybody will agree to that. Uncle adds that if I don't pray myself there are others at home who pray for me daily, which is quite comforting, partly because I'm glad to have anybody who is interested enough in me, and partly because the people who are doing the praying are all devout Christians, and the Bible says that 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' I don't want to die over here, as I have too much

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

to do yet at home, and if prayer will bring me back, then I'm all for it. It's all very well to figure in the 'Killed in Action' reports; it sounds heroic, and all your family and friends are glad to have known you, and write each other about it, but I'd a darn sight rather figure among the 'arrivals at Hoboken' next fall, and I've a very strong notion that I'm going to be in the latter list.

### *Armistice Day in London*

From an American living in London.

*November 25, 1918*

On Monday morning I went down to the office as usual. There was nothing fresh in the papers. Everything in the streets seemed quite normal. At about 10.20 I was rung up from the War Office and told the Germans had accepted all the Allies' conditions.

Presently I looked out of the window and perceived the people in the street were moving towards Mansion House Square. I stepped out on the balcony and saw that quite a knot of people had already collected outside the Mansion. I decided that we had better go out and see what was doing, seeing peace only happened occasionally, so we went downstairs and out. It

## ARMISTICE DAY IN LONDON

seemed that everyone in the city had been visited by the same idea at the same time, for as we walked into the Mansion House Square we found people pouring into it from the several converging streets. In a minute or two the whole place was packed from the Bank and the Royal Exchange right across to the Mansion House and Mappin & Webb's. We were caught in the middle of it. The people just stood there talking and laughing. A minute or two before eleven flags began to be raised on the various buildings. As they appeared, the crowd cheered good-naturedly but with no great fervour. They continued to stand there waiting, nobody quite knew what for. At eleven the air-raid warning bombs began suddenly to boom and the church bells to peal furiously. Then rather a remarkable thing happened. All those people in the Mansion House Square, without anyone leading them, began to sing the Doxology. They sang it straight through once, and when it was finished there was hardly a dry eye in the whole crowd. I know I for one did not realize until that moment what the ending of the fighting meant and what a terrific event had happened that Monday morning.

Others seem to have had the same experience,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

for we had to fight our way back to the office as the crowd went off its head. At first they were content with singing 'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the King.' The Lord Mayor, or somebody, came out onto the porch of the Mansion House and made a speech. No one could hear him or tried to, but you could see his mouth move and his arms wave about. A band appeared from somewhere. Presently the crowd loosened up a little, and busses, taxis and lorries began to move about. The people piled all over them. I telephoned for my wife and little Bobby, and we stood on the balcony of the office and watched the show for hours. Every bus was covered with a shrieking mass of girls, soldiers, and civilians, hanging over the top, on the staircase, and sitting all over the engine hood and the driver's seat. No fares were taken that morning! One taxi went by and we counted twenty-six people on the outside. I don't know how many were inside. Probably none. Huge munition lorries with high sides went thundering around the streets jamb full of populace. The whole of London went completely mad, and the curious thing is that they had no idea they were to. It was all unpremeditated, unexpected, and purely spontaneous.



## ARMISTICE NIGHT IN LONDON

In the afternoon things calmed down a little, but at night everything broke loose again. There were great scenes at the theatres and the variety shows; there were often more of the audience on the stage than actors and actresses. I spent the evening motoring around the streets with my wife. We waited with the crowd in front of Buckingham Palace and saw the King and Queen come out onto their balcony, a little balcony lighted by a very bright light just over it, when they were cheered and sung to — ‘The Long, Long Trail,’ ‘Home, Sweet Home,’ ‘Tipperary,’ and others. We went home down the Mall towards Trafalgar Square, but stopped short of it because the Square was packed and the people showed a desire to pile onto the car. When they start getting on, they swarm all over it, and the only thing to do is to back into a side street and stop, when they get tired and leave you for some new excitement. A large bonfire of the wheels of German cannon was blazing in the middle of the street opposite the Nelson Column.

The celebration continued, principally at night, for over a week. The crowds were not as dense or as good-natured as on the first night, but on the whole they behaved very well and there was surprisingly little drunkenness. They



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

overturned a few motors and burnt a lot of gun carriages, but little damage was done beyond chipping off some large hunks of stone on the pedestal of the Nelson Column as a result of fires being built against three sides of it at once.

*January 1, 1919*

Living conditions here are much the same as when fighting was going on. Food is rationed and will be until May. Matches are still scarce. Petrol is the only thing now back on practically peace basis. But the whole atmosphere of the place is different. For a month or so before the Armistice social life had begun to revive and it is becoming more like its pre-war self every day. The golf links are filling up, although they will not be really played upon until the greens are restored and motors are again in general use. Relief and a gradually dawning realization that better days are coming are evident on all sides. The whole is changed. I did not realize to what an extent the overhanging war abolished joy. It is beginning to reappear once more.

# BOLSHEVISTS IN RIGA

## *Bolshevists in Riga*

Extracts from American officer's diary.

Libau, *June 11, 1919*

The Germans established themselves in Libau after the armistice ostensibly to keep out the Bolsheviks, but as a matter of fact more to make trouble. There are at present about ten thousand German troops in this area. The inhabitants of this country are a free and independent people.

Slowly I am beginning to realize something of the horrors of the Bolsheviks. They have a custom of murdering everybody in the prisons in case they are attacked, so the other night in Riga, when the city fell, they did manage to get into one prison where there were thirty-three of the most prominent citizens, and they were led hurriedly into the court and a machine gun turned on them. It is not hard to understand why the Germans execute all Bolsheviks who are captured. Our representative in Riga attended one of the executions a few days ago, together with our moving-picture operator. The German officer in charge was very accommodating and speeded the party as much as possible so that the light would be good for the pictures. The whole affair was business-like in the extreme.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

The Bolsheviks, eighteen in number, were marched out to the field by a detachment of Boche soldiers, and when they arrived there, they were told to take off their boots (leather must not be wasted) and then compelled to lie down on the ground flat on their stomachs; then they were surrounded by several cordons of soldiers with fixed bayonets and the death sentence was read to them (up to this time they did not know they were to be executed). Meanwhile, the firing squad was lined up a few yards from a big hole in the ground with a wall behind it. The Bolsheviks were to be killed off by threes. When all was ready, the officer called the names of the detail. The men named immediately jumped to their feet and ran to the hole, took a look at their grave, turned facing the firing squad, and stood to attention, no bandages over the eyes, nothing; they just trotted into place like boys lining up for a Virginia reel, and the first one actually looked his executioners in the eye, threw back his head, and laughed. 'Fire,' said the Lieutenant; and, as they fell backward into the hole, 'Next three men here,' and up they came trotting, took a look at their mangled fellows in the pit and faced the firing squad. Not a whimper, not a word. 'Fire! Next three men,'

## BOLSHEVISTS IN RIGA

and so on to the end, taking about ten minutes for the lot. Gosh, the movie operator who took the pictures said it sure got his goat. 'I have taken lots of executions,' he remarked, 'but they have always got up and walked away afterwards.'

Another of our men returned from Riga, and it is really an awful mess. It is quite true that the Bolsheviks have murdered all these people and that they have pillaged every store and house. Their régime was a ghastly nightmare. The Bolshevik commissaires were chosen from their ranks as being the most brutal, the most uneducated, and the most unscrupulous. They dressed in red and sat on red thrones, lived in state and executed whom they thought fit. Very few could read, none could write, and they knew only the law of the firing squad, free money, free women, and the devil take the hindmost. There is probably no bloodier chapter in all history than is Bolshevism, yet what does it all mean, after all? The Colonel said the other day in Riga that it was a disease as much as the flu and just as catching, and the people that caught it were no more responsible than the people who caught the flu. You take a man and oppress him for two thousand years and grind him down and never

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

give him a chance, and then you take him, make him fight, and starve him for two years, and then inject just one germ of a theory that the goods of the world are and should be shared alike, and you don't get a bad or corrupt man or a wicked man, but you will have a man who has a disease, a terrible disease which grips his very soul. Well, the Boche took Riga the other day and took the attitude that the only good Bolshi was a dead Bolshi, and at once instituted a reign of terror which if anything exceeded the one that had preceded it.

Extracts from the diary of an American officer.

Kovno, *June 22, 1919*

The poor Letts have a rotten time. They have no money and couldn't buy anything if they did have it — their soldiers have no shoes; neither have they any of the other necessities for waging a successful war; yet they have two wars on their hands as it is and would like to have two more if they only could get some cartridges and shoes.

Kovno is a rotten town — hot, stupid, and full of Boches. The Lithuanian army has lately cleared practically the whole country of the Bolsheviki — the only city of any size remaining

## LITHUANIA AFTER THE WAR

uncaptured being Dvinsk. We made a trip to the Bolsheviki front about one hundred miles over the Petrograd road — which is about the best road I've ever seen — a regular Fifth Avenue running straight across the country. There was not much to see on the front line, as the Bolsheviks were a long way off and there was no firing to speak of. The soldiers are awfully young and many have no shoes. The Germans are supposed to be backing them up — but all that amounts to is keeping an army in Kovno one hundred miles away.

Conditions in Lithuania are bad. The Bolsheviks swept over them like a swarm of locusts and took practically everything — the last cow, the last horse, the last piece of bread, their seeds — everything. The people are in a hopeless state of rags, poverty, disease, and starvation. Anybody with a pair of shoes is an object of interest — a child who is not hungry does not exist. After the red reign of the Bolsheviks came the Boche and continued the evil work — and all in a country through which the war raged back and forth for two years, which destroyed almost every building in every village. What little was left after the war was taken by the Bolsheviks, what little is left is requisitioned by the Boche.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

In the country still held by the Bolsheviki conditions are even worse; unless these people receive a great deal more aid than they have been getting, next winter they will starve by the thousand.

We went to bed at Lithuanian Headquarters, and just before going to sleep wondered if the Germans would sign the Peace. Then a telegram came for us saying to return immediately — ship waiting Libau to take us to America — urgent. This could only mean that Germany would not sign the peace — so we dressed in a rush and started back.

After many adventures we just got on board the ship Lake Tulare at Kovno before she sailed.

Now that it's all over, I guess the Germans will sign the Peace and all our anxiety will have been groundless — however, it was pretty exciting.



1930

*The Canadian Red Cross Cemetery at Cliveden*

From Lady Drummond, head of the Canadian Red Cross Information Bureau in London, during the Great War.

Montreal, *June 6, 1930*

DEAR AMY,

You wish to know something of the Duchess of Connaught Canadian Red Cross Hospital at Cliveden, and especially how it happened that this hospital stood in the beautiful grounds of Major and Mrs., now Lord and Lady, Astor, during the Great War.

In the autumn of 1914 the Astors offered the British Government a part of their Cliveden estate as the site of a War Hospital. This Government not requiring it, the offer was passed to the Canadian Government by Sir Alfred Keogh, R.A.M.C., and the Canadian Government in its turn referred it to the Canadian Red Cross Society, which accepted the offer. The Hospital had its beginning in the racquet or squash court at the southern end of the Astor estate. This was adapted for the purpose by Lord Astor at

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

his own expense — he also lent some adjacent residences for the staff. The C.R.C. Society supplied one hundred and one beds and other equipment. By the wish of the War Office it was constituted a Base Hospital; that is, the sick and wounded were sent to it, as a rule, from Casualty Clearing Stations. It was evident that the accommodation must be greatly enlarged. Canada responded to the call and sent over some two hundred thousand dollars for the building and equipment of four commodious buildings or wards, as well as for the provision of additional houses for the increasing staff.

The patients at the Hospital were not all Canadians; they might be from any of the Allied Forces, the financial arrangement being that the British and Canadian military authorities gave a per diem allowance for each patient from their respective forces, the Canadian Government appointed and maintained the staff, and the Canadian Red Cross assumed the ultimate responsibility and met all deficits.

Through the long, light airy wards, Lady Astor used to walk with her quick, elastic step, taking grapes from her hothouses to the 'worst cases' and evoking, by her characteristic wit, return sallies from those whose condition was



CANADIAN RED CROSS CEMETERY AT CLIVEDEN, TAPLOW  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE



## THE CEMETERY AT CLIVEDEN

less serious. Her interest in the men individually was unfailing. Her vitality was always at top pitch and where she came monotony and tedium fled.

There is a sequestered and lovely spot in the grounds at Cliveden, which was an 'Italian Garden' before the War. In the summer of '19 it became the quiet resting-place of the men who had died in the Hospital. There are not many graves, but they represent the Allies. A beautiful statue stands there. On the pedestal is an inscription to the glorious memory of those who died; above stands the figure of a woman with arm outstretched as if in 'mothering'; with hand pointing to far horizons. This Memorial, the thought of Lady Astor, was given by the Canadian Red Cross.

Yours affectionately

JULIA DRUMMOND



EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS OF  
MRS. ROBERT GRANT'S SISTER  
MURIEL GRACE GALT

1914-1919

Miss Galt is the daughter of the late Sir Alexander T. Galt, G.C.M.G., of Montreal, Canada. When a young girl she became interested in nursing and entered the Training School for Nurses at the Massachusetts General Hospital. When the Spanish-American War broke out, although still in training, she volunteered for service in the Hospital Ship, Bay State, and went to Porto Rico. She remained there on duty in a hospital for soldiers for some time before returning to Boston and graduating.

Miss Galt then went to Saint Luke's Hospital in Chicago, and subsequently to the Henry Street Settlement in New York under Miss Lillian Wald, where she stayed for about a year.

Later, she returned to Montreal and interested herself in the Victorian Order of Nurses.

*August, 1914*

Owing to the imminent menace of a general European war, I decided to leave for England, so sailed from Montreal on August 4th. There were quite a number of Frenchmen on board, all bound for different regiments and very keen to get over before the war was finished, for they all



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

thought it could not last long, though the Major told me, Germany had sufficient supplies to keep her going without outside help for three years in the event of a successful blockade.

There was quite a demonstration as we left, waving of the Tricolor and shouts of 'Vive la France!'

On reaching Quebec, we learnt that England had declared war on Germany and the British Admiralty had cabled that no ships were to sail for the present, so we lay in mid-stream till dawn of the 8th.

On drawing near Moville, we were challenged by an Irish Constabulary launch and several officers and soldiers came on board with fixed bayonets and ordered the Marconi to be dismantled, 'by order of the King.' Before any passengers were allowed to land at Liverpool, an army of workmen came on board, and in the twinkling of an eye, the inside of the Victorian was torn out, as she had been chartered by the Government. Everything was wonderfully expeditiously done, and each article of furniture, even to the flower-pots, was marked.

*August and September, London*

The whole atmosphere of London is so exciting. The order and organization is simply wonderful,

## LONDON IN 1914

it must be seen to be believed; except for the great quietness one would never believe the whole country was teeming with anxiety. Every one is very serious, but perfectly ready to see the thing through to the end. The last few days only half the lights have been allowed in London at night. A large searchlight is being erected on the top of Hyde Park Gate. All the most valuable paintings in the National Gallery are being put in the cellar. The Post Office and Telegraph Buildings are strongly guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets.

Sir W. C. told me that he had just come up from Chatham and seen the German wounded and prisoners arrive, and they wanted to know when they were to be shot, as they heard the English gave no quarter!

While awaiting developments, I have been on a delightful visit to Howick, the Greys. They have turned part of the house into a hospital, everything very complete. I also was thrilled at meeting Lord Roberts.

It is wonderful to see as many as a thousand recruits marching four abreast in their ordinary clothes, to enlist.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

*September 25, 1914*

At last a wire has come from the St. John Ambulance saying I must leave for France in the morning! It seems I am wanted for a French Red Cross Hospital at Dinan, and I have been presented with a large badge denoting my rank as matron!

*Dinan, September 28, 1914*

L'Hôpital St. Charles is in a villa, belonging to the Holiday House Association and lent to the French Red Cross for the duration of the war. It is a fair-sized building and can accommodate about fifty men. The rooms are all very small, and the stairs very narrow and winding. The patients have to be carried up in blankets. I am the only nurse with training, and there are about ten ladies who come every day to help. Also there are two watchers, 'Veilleurs,' who volunteer for each night. It is really wonderful the way men and women 'do their bit,' for these men are all over military age and have their ordinary work to do in the daytime, and yet they are more than willing to sit up at night.

For helpers the Breton cook has some Belgian refugees, of whom there are fifteen hundred in the town, most of them arriving with absolutely

## THE HOSPITAL AT DINAN

nothing, after their weary tramp of days. Poor things, the tales they tell bring tears to the eyes. Dinan is a small town of barely eleven thousand inhabitants and now certainly less, with most of the male population away, and yet, in addition to these Belgians, we have sixteen hundred German prisoners, including three hundred and fifty German wounded, and there are eight hundred wounded of our own men, and no trained nurses with the exception of myself.

*October 14*

I was called up the other day before 6 A.M., as wounded were arriving, and fifty-three were brought in, several being quite bad cases. I often spend the nights as well at the hospital.

The house was built in 1768, so it is fairly ancient, but it has w.c.'s and running water, but the hot water has to be brought up from the kitchen. But really things are on the whole very well arranged.

*October 29, London*

I have been unlucky enough to get an infected thumb and have come to London for treatment.

Greatly to my joy the hospital has asked me to bring back another nurse with me.

I was greatly shocked to hear of Lord Roberts's

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

death. I had tea with them a week ago and he looked so well.

*Dinan, November*

I have succeeded in bringing back with me a Scotch nurse who is married to an English surgeon, now at the Front.

I went to see an English Tommy in one of the hospitals who is here wounded. He made light of his own doings and very narrow escape from capture. Since my return I find he was one of the famous three of L Battery, R.H.A. He never mentioned his own heroism. I am delighted to hear he got the V.C.

*December 8*

I see by the paper today that the class of 1916 is to be called in March, i.e., the young men of eighteen, and yesterday those of 1887 were called out; they are between forty-five and fifty years old!

Mrs. R. (the trained nurse) and I went to Dinard and St. Malo last week and spent the morning at the hospital given by Canada to the French, and we met an English doctor who has been at the Front ever since the war broke out. He told us many tales of escape. He said he himself brought in civilians forced by the Germans

## FRANCE IN WARTIME

to go in front of their men. One, an old man of seventy-five, who died next day, another a little girl of seven, stabbed in the back twice by bayonets, and so on.

We have a Belgian girl helping in the kitchen. ... There were thirteen in the family, and it was just after Mass on Sunday when word came 'sauve qui peut.' She just caught up a coat and satchel containing a little money and they fled. They walked for six days and nights to Dinan, resting in haystacks. Her old father of seventy-six gave out after a while, and her brothers took turns in carrying him on their backs. Her story is only one of thousands!

*London, December*

As work at the hospital happened to be rather slack, we were asked if we would not like to spend Christmas in England.

We left Friday night, and found the station a seething crowd of young men, or rather boys, for the nineteen-year-old conscripts were called out and their women-folk were down to say good-bye.

Paris you would hardly recognize, it is so 'triste'; Boulogne is exactly like an English military town, literally swarming with Tommies and quantities of munitions of war.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

We returned to Dinan by way of Dunkirk, and it was arranged for us to go on an Admiralty boat, on the second of January. Dunkirk is the British Naval Transport Headquarters as Boulogne is the military. The two hotels were jam full, but a friend kindly gave up his room and said he would sleep on one of the ships.

The next morning we were wakened by our landlady bringing in our coffee with a very anxious face, and saying a German aeroplane had just gone over the house, and wouldn't we share the cellar with her, which she was getting in order! We naturally refused, and instead, hastily dressing, hurried out to see what was happening. The day was beautifully fine, and it was a most exciting thing to see those hostile planes flying over the city and the shells from the guns bursting like little fluffy clouds all around. The falling shrapnel is really more dangerous than the bombs. Six Taubes in all flew over us, and after lunch we were greatly thrilled by seeing one being chased by an English aeroplane. It was a lovely sight (if the dreadful idea had not been so evident). They were like two huge birds, rising and falling. By the way, the effect the booming of the guns had on the



## CROWDED CALAIS

birds was remarkable. Hundreds were flying round in a most agitated way. In the twinkling of an eye everybody vanished from sight.

It is an uncanny feeling to realize that at any moment death may descend from above, but the people remain wonderfully calm. We had seen the funeral of the twenty-one victims of the previous raid, only the day before. The injuries are awful.

At Calais we found every hotel packed, so a friendly porter suggested taking us to the Anglo-Belgian rest station, where he said we might stop. So we actually found ourselves in a huge railway shed prepared for two hundred wounded, asking for a bed! The night Sister received us kindly, and had two beds pushed into a corner and partially screened off. While we were taking a late supper, a doctor brought in Maxine Elliot, who wanted to see the place, and she told us of her work in taking food to the starving Belgians in the south, by means of barges, the food being supplied by America. Really awfully interesting! She is a very handsome woman.

We got very little rest that night, for shortly after lying down, the wounded began to arrive, about one hundred and twenty in all. But it was all in the way of experience! We left by the

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

only good train to Paris at 10 A.M. We left for Dinan next morning.

*Dinan, January, 1915*

A rather thrilling interruption! A letter from the Matron of the Queen of the Belgians' Hospital at La Panne, asking me and Mrs. R. to come as soon as possible! So we have arranged to leave here tomorrow night, for the Front, for La Panne is only three miles from Furnes. I believe I have Sir William Osler to thank for it, for he is a friend of a doctor there, so I wrote to him asking him to put in a word for us, and had such a nice reply saying he had written at once and hoped we might get there, as he understood it was a beautifully equipped place. Rather different from St. Charles, which I am truly sorry to leave, as we have been very happy here.

We go by Paris and Calais, and they will send a car to meet us there.

*Calais, January 28*

Here we are waiting for a motor to take us to La Panne. The negotiations are done by telephone from the Ambulance, Jeanne d'Arc, here, which hospital was under Dr. Depage, but he now devotes all his time to the one at La Panne.

## A HOSPITAL AT THE FRONT

He is surgeon to the Queen of the Belgians and a most able operator.

It was really very hard saying good-bye to St. Charles and Dinan. The personnel of the hospital all expressed much regret, but I think they were rather proud that we were considered so good that we were being sent up to the Front! — a sort of reflected glory!

The harrowing side of war was thrust upon us by seeing many carloads of little plain wooden crosses, going up to the Front.

*January 28, 1915, La Panne*

Here we are at last. The day has been beautifully fine and cold. We two and a Belgian lady left Calais in a limousine driven by Dr. Depage's son, and had a delightful ride here. We came through Dunkirk. The trip was most interesting — signs of war everywhere — hundreds of soldiers, trenches, barbed-wire entanglements, guns, etc. Before leaving Calais, we heard La Panne had been bombarded, but that isn't true; it was a village about a mile away. We heard the guns booming. But La Panne is now a field hospital, Furnes having been evacuated two days ago. We could not be nearer the front without being in the trenches! — and oh! the horror of it! I

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

thought I knew pretty well how awful the whole thing was, but to see these poor maimed women and children, it just tears your heart. I have two women, one a dear little nun, quite young; has lost one arm and the other is broken. Another is a young married woman: has lost her arm at the shoulder; there's a baby of two has lost one foot, and the other they hardly think they can save; and so on. It is too awful! And then the wounded soldiers are dreadfully injured. Those that don't die, they send on to the hospital at Calais, as quickly as possible, to make room for others. We have several wounded Germans, and I was saying to some of them I expected they would soon be well enough to be sent to England. I wish you could have seen their faces light up! It was what they were hoping for, as they had heard how well treated they are there.

The majority of the patients are Belgians, though we have some French and German, but no British. This place swarms with soldiers, it being the reserves for the trenches.

La Panne itself is built on the beach, and today has been glorious with the blue sky, yellow sands, the dunes stretching all round us, and the sea rolling in.

## THE KING OF THE BELGIANS

*February, 1915*

The other day we walked to Idesbald to see a villa built by Germans and destroyed by Belgians, evidently intended for a gun — tremendous concrete floors and walls and motors for raising shells, etc.

*February 4*

Quite the most exciting day we have had! About twelve bombs dropped by Taubes. Such a noise as they made as they exploded! Our little villa shook like an earthquake. Some of them were incendiary bombs and flashes of fire rose as they burst. The planes looked like midgets in the sky.

The human toll of their visit: three killed and a woman in the hospital dying.

*February 6, 1915*

The King of the Belgians visited the hospital last Sunday. He is very tall and good-looking and very shy, I believe. My little French nun was greatly excited at speaking to him, and in a pretty speech, thanked him on behalf of France, for all he had done.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

*February 15, 1915, La Panne*

We had our half-day, and as I was very anxious to get to Furnes, and had promised to call at the Convent and see about my little nun's clothes, we set out and were lucky enough to get lifts all the way.

The town has suffered horribly from bombardments and there are no civilians to be seen. We called at the Convent de Louvencourt, and found one nun and a lay sister there alone. The nun was delighted to see me and to show us around the convent, which has suffered considerably from the bombardments. In the small chapel we saw the place where the Mother Superior was kneeling at prayer when a shell came in, twisting the centre candelabra into a very weird shape on its way and spattering the walls with shrapnel, but doing no great damage. The shell that caused such grave injury to Sœur Marie-Christine, as she was crossing the garden, ploughed up a huge hole. After seeing all these things, I asked the rosy-cheeked nun if we might not see her sleeping-quarters in the cellar, to which she consented, as I had been so kind to Sœur M.-C.! She lighted a candle and preceded us down a dark stairway to the vaulted cellar, which was in two compartments, each with

## PATIENTS AT LA PANNE

neatly made beds on the bricks; on enquiry we learned that the other beds were occupied by the baker and his family, who had no cellar in their house, but fortunately there were two stairways leading to the cellar, as otherwise, as my nun roguishly remarked, it would not be 'con-venable' for her and the baker to descend by the same stair!

After bidding her good-bye, we were successful in getting hot coffee in a rather damaged hotel on the 'Place,' and while drinking it, some nice-looking young English aviators came in, who very kindly offered us a lift back in their car, which we gladly accepted, the evening being wet and very squally, and not relishing the walk of three miles.

*March 5*

One of our patients is the man who opened the flood-gates to flood the country. He fell into the water and for three hours swam in his clothes and in the dark, before being rescued. He has been in some time and is such a nice old fellow. He is to be decorated before he leaves. Yesterday a stretcher-bearer was brought in shot through the leg. He was helping to carry his wounded lieutenant out of the trenches, a priest going



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

before carrying the Red Cross flag, and four times the Germans deliberately fired on them!

You say you believe the early stories of atrocities were exaggerated, but I am afraid you are mistaken. Only last night I had a long talk with a Belgian doctor, who has been with the army since the beginning of the war till he came here two months ago, and he told me some awful things! He says drink is responsible for practically everything. He himself, with the French officers, went around at Dixmude and smashed up the casks and what bottles they could find, just in order to prevent drunkenness, and I suppose the larger number of German officers took no precautions. He told me of a doctor he knew personally, a civilian, who, with his son, was shot before the eyes of the wife and five daughters, all of whom were stripped of every vestige of clothing. After the shooting, the women were pushed into the house and it was set fire to. When they were thoroughly terrified at the thought of being burned alive, they were driven out with whips along the road. They are now in England. I was saying, I never thought I should reach the day, as I have now, of hoping Germany itself would suffer some of the terrible desolation of war, and he said he feared the time. There is

## HERO OF THE SLUICE-GATES

hardly a soldier who will not thirst for revenge, and recall their women-folk who have been made innocent victims of the cruelty and lust of their conquerors.

*March 8*

Our sluice-gate patient was decorated today by the King with the Médaille Militaire, awarded for conspicuous bravery. He is a nice old fellow of fifty-three, and it is very amusing to hear him talk. After his decoration he was greatly excited and was boasting to another man, how many more Germans he had killed than the other could ever hope to do!!

I had had a very busy morning with twenty-eight very heavy dressings and had just got through, and as Mrs. R. and I had both had attacks of rheumatism, the doctor said we had better go to London for treatment. After some difficulty in securing military permits we reached Folkstone by way of Calais.

*April 4, 1915*

At last we are sufficiently recovered to return to La Panne. We had some difficulty in getting permission to re-enter the 'War Zone,' but I bethought me of the military permit I had to cross the frontier when we left La Panne, and

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

at the French Consulate in London it was eagerly viséd, as they said it now made me a soldier!

*La Panne, April, 1915*

I have just got back to my room, having been out since four this morning, without breakfast. Two trainloads of wounded came in from Dunkirk — five or six hundred men. There has been heavy fighting there. Never have I seen a more miserable-looking crowd of men than they took off that train this morning. Those that were able to walk just barely made the ambulances. Their clothes were all torn; they were covered with mud from head to foot; some had no shoes. I shall never forget the first glimpse of those five hundred wounded in the station, and then, of course, the smell is terrific. The men are young and attractive. I have hardly seen one old soldier.

*May, 1915, La Panne*

Monday night we spent ages at the window watching the starlights and flashes from the guns. It was like looking into the infernal regions, and when you realized that ambulance after ambulance was bringing in wounded, it was too awful; in addition to the lights the roar of the guns was terrific, especially yesterday when the Venerable

## POISON GAS AND THE LUSITANIA

bombarded Nieuport; she lay just off my window, and every time she fired, you really might think the house would collapse. One of our numerous Taube visitors dropped a note, the other day, saying we were to be the next to be visited, so we have made all our arrangements to take refuge in the dunes! But really there would be little way of escaping if the threat were carried out.

Captain R., Mrs. R.'s husband, turned up the other day, having succeeded in getting away from Ypres for a couple of hours. He says the poisonous gas the Germans are using is horrible beyond words, for those it does not kill are incapacitated forever, it works such havoc in the system. Shocking!

We have been dreadfully depressed lately, what with none too encouraging reports, and then the dreadful loss of the Lusitania. Poor Madame Depage was one of the victims. Dr. Depage had gone to England to meet her and both their sons are in the trenches. It is terrible for them all, they were devoted to her. She was a splendid woman.

Spies seem to be constantly at work; the telephone wire between La Panne and St. Idesbald has been cut three times today.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

*May 15, La Panne*

The day being lovely, Mrs. R., Sister Frith, who is in charge of the Isolation villa, and I started out in hope of getting to Nieuport. We went by the dunes, as being less likely to run across sentries, though they have a way of popping up unexpectedly! The sheltered places in the dunes are carpeted with the sweetest wild violets, pansies, daisies, and a very fragrant sweet-briar rose, which runs along the ground, not growing on bushes.

On leaving Coxyde-les-Bains behind us, with a warning shout from a soldier that it was 'très dangereux' beyond, we cut across the dunes. One of the first things we passed was a lonely grave, with a rough wooden cross and wreath made of the rushes growing about, erected to 'Ahmud,' a Zouave, poor fellow, probably a 'colonial' and far from his own warm country. We passed a couple of ponds or large puddles, full of slime, with soldiers washing their shirts. When we exclaimed at the horrid water, they simply laughed and said, 'C'est la guerre!'

In the distance we saw a spire which we made for, and, at last, found ourselves at Oost Dunkerque, which has suffered dreadfully from bombardments. The place is practically deserted,

## ON THE WAY TO NIEUPORT

every second house being in ruins. We asked the gendarme at the corner of the street, if we could get coffee anywhere, and he took us across to a house riddled with holes, where a very nice woman made us some delicious coffee. While it was cooking, she showed us the wreckage in her house, half the roof off and only the kitchen habitable. We picked up several pieces of shrapnel in the rooms! The back of the house was practically intact, with a pretty garden, and she gave us each a bunch of lilacs. Luckily for us, they were not bombarding that day, for they have kept it up pretty steadily for weeks now.

Being greatly refreshed with our coffee and rest, we sallied forth, thanked the gendarme and sentries, gave them cigarettes and took their photographs in front of a ruined house. Then we asked if we might walk about a little and see the wrecked houses. They complied, but told us not to go farther than the end of the village street, as it was not safe; so we wandered on, snapping sentries, etc., and wondering how far we might venture, when suddenly a British motor came tearing along. We waved to the driver to stop and asked him where he was going, and when he said Nieuport, we asked him to take us. He said it was very dangerous, but we assured

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

him if he could go we could, provided we did not get him into trouble; as for that, he said, he could not say, as he had never carried passengers before. So we all climbed in and spun over the ground. We had to pass a cross-roads, where he said he had to go particularly fast, as it was a favourite spot for shells, and sure enough one burst in a field close by just as we passed!! He took us right up to the British camp, and we had a thrillingly interesting visit. The officers were all so nice, young, and good-looking, and delighted to see us, as they never see any women. They showed us their dugouts where they sleep, and the shed or farmhouse where they have their office and sitting-room, with several holes in the walls caused by bursting shells; also a clock, through the back of which a bit of shrapnel had passed without it ever stopping! They had some lovely bits of furniture they had picked up in the ruined houses. Meantime the shells were screaming through the air and bursting in the little woods all about us, but everyone was so unconcerned we, too, forgot to be afraid! They thought it most remarkable that we had managed to get there without showing any papers, and said it was lucky for us Prince Alexander wasn't there, as he would send us right back to



## A SUCCESSFUL OUTING

England! They gave me, as a souvenir, the head of the first German naval shell that fell into Nieuport! When the time came for us to return, they very kindly sent us all the way back in the ammunition lorry. We asked the driver whether he had got into any trouble by bringing us. He said, 'No, indeed, they were too glad to see you!!' In addition to the officers, the men were very glad to see us, as our only British patients came from that sector, and they were pleased to hear how they were getting on.

Only when we got back did we realize quite how dangerous it was, and we hardly slept that night!! Everybody is green with envy at our successful outing!!

Another day some of us visited a Zouave camp in the neighbourhood. They (the Zouaves) were most hospitable, and while we were enjoying some light refreshments, one of them said to me, 'Didn't I see you yesterday in Nieuport?' It seemed we had passed them on the road. I was rather pleased at the incident, as Dr. M., who was with us on this occasion, had been rather skeptical as to our really getting to Nieuport!

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

*May 20, 1915*

Poor Madame Depage! Weren't you shocked at her death? The funeral was this morning at La Panne, and was very beautiful. The day was perfect, and the Queen of the Belgians came over from England for it. A great number of high military officials were present, and about fifty of the Sisters, in indoor uniform, walked behind the hearse, six abreast, carrying the exquisite floral offerings, and on either side were four British Sisters, carrying on a sort of a stretcher the biggest wreaths, and on the other four American Sisters in the same manner. The coffin was covered with a large Red Cross flag. After the Church service, we all walked slowly to the grave, which had been dug on a hillock in the dunes, as Dr. Depage hopes to move her to Brussels eventually. It was a most beautiful and impressive sight. Wasn't it too terrible! Dr. Depage could not recognize her at all, and the body had to be undressed before it could be identified. They say she was wonderfully cool and brave on the ship, and was in the act of helping a wounded man before she had to leap into the sea, which, I understand, she did, fastened in some way to an American doctor. But he knocked his head and became unconscious for a little, in jumping,

## NIGHT-TIME IN THE HOSPITAL

and when he came to, she had disappeared. Poor Pierre, her son, said yesterday it will be when they get back to Brussels that they will realize it fully.

### *A Little Episode on Night Duty*

All the lights in the great ward had been put out, and the hundred and ten men were about to start in on another night of tossing in their beds, of suffering, and a few of sleeping. Nothing was audible save the groaning of a man here and there, and once in a while of a man calling out for a drink, or for a sleeping potion. Many of them so dread the oncoming night that they cry out for morphine long before there is any need of it, and in this case a nurse will fill her syringe full of sterile water, and no sooner does the patient feel the injection than he is off to sleep. But night-time to the sufferer is easily the worst in the twenty-four hours, because he has nothing to distract him, and it is so quiet that the throbbing of his wound seems to beat against the bed-clothes and to make as much noise to his shattered nerves as an oncoming regiment.

I was on night duty, and was sitting quietly at one end of the ward knitting in the dark, wait-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

ing for some sick man to call out to 'Sister' or 'Nurse.' I heard a tossing of a man with insomnia, and I went up quietly to his bed. The soldier was a little English boy, only twenty years old, and as I looked at his young, fresh face, I wondered how his mother could have let him go out of her sight. He looked up at me. 'I can't sleep, Sister,' he said, 'there's no use trying. The pain isn't as bad as it has been, but it is just enough to keep me awake.' He had been in the ward over a week, but I remember I had never asked him how he had been wounded, even though he told me a good deal about himself. I whispered to him to tell me about his wound.

'Well, you see, Sister,' he began, 'it was near Arras, and we were making a charge. I had been firing a few moments only, and we were in a field chasing the enemy. A bullet came and hit me right in the lung. I fell over like a shot, and lay that way all night, but I did not lose consciousness. I do not know why I was not picked up quicker, but a good many of us fell that day. I had a terrible time breathing, and simply could not turn over or move in any way. Next morning, I thought to myself, "I must get up." So when it was broad daylight, I made a great

## A WOUNDED TOMMY

effort, and stood up. At that moment, I saw three Germans coming along. I do not think they knew I was wounded, but one of them fired. Fortunately, I was too weak to stand, I must have lost a good bit of blood by then, so that the bullet went right through my left foot as I fell. I looked around, and saw a Tommy lying at no great distance. He was pretty far gone. I recognized in him an old pal of mine at home. He was trying to talk to me, and I made out that he wanted my water canteen. It still had some water in it, so I picked it up as best I could, and threw it to him. It got within a couple of feet of his reach, but he was too weak to get it. Just then the three Germans passed along, and Billy stared up at them with a great pleading look in his face, and pointed to the canteen. One of the three Germans kicked it with his boot, off in the opposite direction to Billy's outstretched hand. Well, I thought that would mean the end of Billy, because he was all used up from a hemorrhage from a wound in his leg, and his cheeks didn't have a drop of blood left in them. He lay there very quiet. But just as the three Germans had got by him, I saw him raise himself by a superhuman effort, pick up his gun, and fire three times with unerring aim. I don't know

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

where his strength came from, because, two minutes before, he had not been able to pull himself two feet along the ground; but I saw all three of those Germans reel, and then fall to the ground as neatly as three ninepins bowled over by a ball. I quickly looked back at Billy, who was completely knocked out by the effort, and I heard him say with his last breath, "I can die happy now, we're quits."

'A couple of hours after, those of us who were still alive were taken to the First Aid Post, and two days from then, I landed here.'

'Poor boy,' I whispered, 'you certainly have had your share of this war.'

'Yes,' he said, 'but I am lucky to be getting well, and going home so that I can see my people again. You know sometimes in the trenches when a man was carried out wounded, some of us would say, "Lucky dog, he is almost sure of seeing his people again, whereas there is no certainty that the next moment *we* may not be completely killed." So, you see,' he added, 'I am one step towards home, and at least that much nearer than if I were not wounded.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I am glad you have come to us, and now I will get you some hot milk, and you go to sleep like a good boy.'



## TRANSFERRED TO EGYPT

I was starting off to get him some milk when I heard the Frenchman in the next bed speaking. I leaned over, hoping that I had not kept him awake by talking too loudly to his allied comrade, but found that he was only murmuring in his sleep. I listened a moment, and heard him saying, 'Mother, mother, what will you say when you see that I have only one leg?' I realized that he was another of our boy soldiers, and, like his friend in the next bed, should have been at home with his mother. His right leg had been amputated the day before. I went to get the milk, but by the time I came back, the little English Tommy was sound asleep, and probably dreaming of the people to whom he was going back.

Towards the end of May, Miss Galt left La Panne, and after a few weeks in London, she was notified that, as a member of the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Reserve, she was to go to Egypt.

Hospital Ship, Glenart Castle  
*August 24, 1915*

There are about fifty nurses on board, and we are all, I believe, bound straight for Alexandria, though no one really knows, except the Captain, and he vouchsafes never a word.



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

The weather is gorgeous, warm and a wonderful blue sea. There are a number of Indians on board. They look so picturesque in their turbans.

Instead of being blanketed at night, we are like a picture palace show. In the daytime we are painted white with a wide band of green around, and a huge Red Cross on either side. At night we have a band of green lights strung all round and an enormous electric reflector thrown on the Red Cross, also an electric Red Cross.

The Aquitania was in Southampton when we left, having just rushed back from the Dardanelles with three thousand wounded on board and protected by two destroyers. Of course, she is not a hospital ship and they had to zigzag all the way.

Nasrieh School Military Hospital  
Cairo, *September 9, 1915*

After spending Saturday night in Alexandria, fourteen of us came on here, and at present I am on night duty for which I volunteered, being so much cooler. My ward has ninety-one beds, but none of the patients are very bad, so thus far the work is not hard. The equipment of the hospital is very meagre, and really one has hardly

## WORK IN THE CAIRO HOSPITAL

anything to work with, which seems too bad. The work here is so totally different to what I have been doing that I find it rather strange. In a British Military Hospital practically everything is done by the orderlies and the Sister has the responsibility and oversight. Of course the actual work is nothing like as hard as I have been doing. The days are glorious, pretty warm, but not too oppressive. Fourteen of the sisters are living at the Y.W.C.A., and they certainly make us very comfortable.

*Cairo, September 26*

The conditions on the Peninsula are awful and getting worse all the time, as the monsoons are beginning. Being only five miles across, the men are never out of shell fire, and they say they are almost better off when they are actually in the so-called 'firing line' than in the reserves or rest camps, as sometimes the shells go over them, but invariably hit the others. It is marvellous that any of them escape.

My night orderly, who was several weeks on the Peninsula, told me he could not go in the firing line because of his sight, and when I exclaimed, asking him how then he got in the army, he said he learned the eye test off by heart!

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

He had almost a worse job in consequence, as he had to go in front of the firing line and dig trenches as the men advanced. There is hardly any opportunity to bury the dead and the heat of the sun is fearful. He said the Turks sometimes buried their men in their trenches, below their feet, and only half did it.

At the landing at Suvla Bay a lot of scrub was set on fire by the shell fire and about five hundred of our wounded were burned, it being absolutely impossible to remove them. The men who were there said it was awful. The casualties on that beach at their landing were fifteen thousand!

Enough of these horrors, although one can't get away from them, and I suppose should not when they are playing such a vital part in the world's doings.

There is the most splendid view from the roof of my ward. I always try to run up for a moment at sunrise. The water comes almost up to the Pyramids now, a great lake lying in front of them. A lady who arrived yesterday said they had an exciting trip through the Mediterranean. For three days and nights they did not undress, and zigzagged all the way.

Most of the patients in my ward are convalescent, so the work is not too strenuous. The ceil-

## THE HORRORS OF GALLIPOLI

ings are lofty with verandahs all round and windows on either side, so there is a good current of air. The patients are all nice fellows, but what horrors they have gone through! -- a very hell! I have been nursing our Allies so long, it seems strange to find them all English here and very pleasant. They can't bear to speak of the Peninsula, and the way they have been killed like flies, it is awful. A Tommy of the Lancashires told me it took nineteen transports to bring them there, and it won't take more than two to bring them home again and they have been reinforced several times! The Baby of the ward is just seventeen, and has been several weeks in that Inferno. They all say France is child's play compared to Gallipoli. Even to speak of it makes many of them cry.

*October*

I feel that my letters are very dull, for nothing very striking happens and there is not much to write about in the daily round of work; besides, the knowledge that letters are censored is hampering. In off-duty time we often go to that portion of the desert which was a huge cemetery more than a thousand years ago, and do bead scratching, as we call it. We often return with

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

a number of very pretty ones. The Moham-  
medan at prayer is an unfailing source of admira-  
tion to me: nothing disturbs him; he is absolutely  
indifferent to what is going on about him.

More troops and more nurses keep pouring  
into Egypt and no one knows what is expected.

*November, 1915*

A great cloud of locusts came over the hos-  
pital today; it was most interesting, the sky was  
literally black, and the men had a fine time  
catching them, many falling by striking the  
building as they swept over. The plague of the  
Bible was forcibly brought to mind.

*January, 1916*

The hospitals have been cleared out twice  
in preparation for casualties from the Dar-  
danelles, but the Peninsula was evacuated with-  
out any, Praise be! Our men are feeling very  
sore over the evacuation; it does seem terrible if  
those lives have been given in vain.

A patient of mine happened to be the man  
detailed to light candles (placed in boxes), each  
of which had four notches, each notch attached  
to a detonator. His account of his task was most  
graphic. The trenches were absolutely empty,

## THE CAMEL TRANSPORT CORPS

right up to the firing line, and he was the last to leave. After the work was finished, he had to return through the empty trenches, the only sign of life being the Turkish bullets which wheezed by his head, in response to what they thought was our men firing. He said his officer confessed to him afterwards, it was a task he doubted he could have done himself. He arrived back at the Base at a dead run, in an absolute funk, the sweat pouring off him in rivers.

Christmas went off very well; the ward decorations were very pretty, and we had a lovely tree and tea for the men. A friend of mine in England sent out a parcel of lavender bags to distribute among my patients, and I never realized before what it meant to homesick men, such a delicious whiff from home! They were enchanted and tucked them under their pillows with joy!

We went out to Matarieh to see the Camel Transport Corps, a new corps which is being fitted out for the Canal. The officers are being taken from among the young Englishmen in Cairo who speak Arabic, that being absolutely necessary. Ten thousand great ugly brutes were grumbling and groaning. When the men want them to lie down, their heads are fastened by a short rope to the ground, and after feeling the

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

resistance caused by it for a little, they gradually fold up their legs and get down!

*March, 1916*

The work is very slack of late and mostly convalescents. Wonderful boxes of dressings from Boston and beautiful 'comforts' from Winnipeg have come and caused great delight.

*April*

What a change! 108° on leaving the house, the outside air strikes you like a blast from a red-hot furnace.

*May, 1916*

I was electrified at being called up on the telephone by 'Matron' to say I was to go to India in four or five days! Three Sisters are to go from this hospital. About six weeks ago, volunteers were asked for Mesopotamia, badly needed, and I put my name down, but having heard nothing further, had dismissed it from mind.

*May 5, 1916*

A big convoy came in about 7 P.M., mostly stretcher cases. The hospital has been full up for some time and we have plenty to do. We had to hurry out about eighty cases to make room for the new ones. Nasrieh has been made a Base



## INDIA

Hospital. It is difficult sometimes finding employment to amuse the convalescent patients. One man has hemstitched a cap for me very nicely!

On the 15th we bade farewell to the Nasrieh Schools and left at 11 A.M. The journey as far as Ismailia was not too bad, as there was a good dining-car, where we lunched. We had a young Australian officer to talk to who hadn't spoken to a woman since dear knows when, and upon parting amused us very much by saying if he weren't a soldier he would weep!

### *India and Mesopotamia*

May, 1916

We boarded the Dongola at Port Tewfik, Suez, on May 15. She is a regular P. & O. transport, now converted into a remarkably nice hospital ship. There are about one hundred women on board. Our destination is uncertain, but the ship goes to Bombay in any case.

We dropped anchor in Bombay Harbour on Saturday afternoon. At last I am really in India, but under what different conditions to what I have always imagined! One wing of the big Taj Mahal Hotel has been given up to the Nursing Sisters, so we are quite comfortably housed.

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Greatly to my disgust I am not going to Mesopotamia with the first lot of nurses, but am to do temporary duty at the Freeman Thomas Hospital, a fine building intended for a technical school, but taken over by Lady Willingdon and named for her son, who is 'missing' in France. The present staff consists of Eurasian nurses who have done awfully good work, but now that it has been taken over by the Government, it will be run on stricter, more military lines. We go on duty at eight, and one day have from eleven to one off, including lunch, come off duty at eight, and the next day have the afternoon free.

One of my patients is a poor fellow from Kut, a returned prisoner. It is the saddest thing to see him; he is literally nothing but skin and bone, and is failing rapidly. Curiously enough, the Indian prisoners stood the starvation much better than our men, whose digestive organs were practically destroyed. Another of the patients has had a dreadful experience and yet makes very little of it. His thigh was fractured by a bullet, and after he fell he was hit five times, one going through his neck which has paralyzed his left arm. One of his comrades, also wounded in the legs, so that he could not walk, tried to pull him along by a puttee held in his good hand,

## OFF FOR MESOPOTAMIA

but in their slow progress to cover, my man was hit again, and thinking he was done for he told the other to leave him and seek shelter for himself. For two days the poor fellow lay in the open and on his face, and the metal of his equipment burnt two blisters on his chest, and though that was eight weeks ago they are barely healed now. Finally, he was picked up by the Black Watch and taken to a field ambulance. Such an experience for a fishmonger by trade and only a boy of twenty-four!

*June, 1916*

Having been granted a week's leave, I have seized the opportunity to visit Delhi, Agra, etc., as I did not know that I should ever have the chance to see these wonderful places again. At Agra we were recalled by wire — 'Return immediately' — to find we were to sail for Mesopotamia the following morning.

The Takada dropped anchor outside the bar beyond the Shat-el-Arab, and the Karadenaz drew alongside and first trans-shipped her load of some five hundred patients and then took us aboard. Our new abode seemed far from attractive, decks so dirty, and the heat was terrific. We disposed ourselves about the deck, but

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

it was so hard and so hot sleep was rather a fickle visitant. We crossed the bar at eight the next morning, and very soon had our first sight of 'Messypot,' a low-lying strip of date palms and beyond, the apparently limitless desert. I am told that hospital ships go out every two days from Basra, averaging five hundred patients, and this had gone on for at least two months.

Three days later — nine of us are still awaiting orders for Amara, but as usual no one knows anything definitely. The rest have gone on duty here. After three more days of waiting I went on duty at the 'Palace,' a large house belonging to some rich native, and where I had my first case of 'heat stroke.' It is a terrible thing, coming on so suddenly. Five minutes before, the patient's temperature had been 99, and in the twinkling of an eye it had rushed up to 108, and he was raving delirious. Ice baths are the only things to relieve them, and the great difficulty is getting the ice, as the supply is very limited. This hospital has about thirteen hundred beds or more. The temperature averages 110° during the night. Now both ice and fans are to be found at all the big hospitals.

After a short stay at Basra, fifteen of us started for Amara, to my joy. The greater part of a very

## THE HOSPITAL AT AMARA

hot afternoon was spent transferring ourselves and belongings to the paddle steamer. We made the journey most comfortably, as the stern of the boat was given up to us and we spread all our little beds on deck and lived there.

After leaving Kurna, the supposed site of the Garden of Eden, at the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris, we went through the most forlorn country. It made me sad to think of our poor men marching across this dreary country, with not a twig to shelter them, and one could appreciate Jonah's feelings when the gourd sprang up to protect him. The only excitement was to see the natives running along the border of the river, trying to sell melons and chickens, and the women swimming out to the boats with bowls of eggs on their heads. The boat is protected with steel sheets against bullets.

We were fortunate in securing a Turkish barracks for our hospital, and very quickly had the place whitewashed and cleaned and full of patients. It has large openings for doors and windows, and whenever there is a sand-storm the results are distracting! The ceilings are made of grass mattings and heavy rafters, where the birds build their nests and many rats and cats find their homes, and I have even found con-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

valescents snake-hunting with large sticks! The ants, too, are a great trial, especially a very tiny variety, who swarm everywhere in millions. Scorpions, too, and bats abound, and often during the night jackals find their way into the hospital, notwithstanding armed sentries at the entrance. The nurses are never allowed out alone on account of possible insult from the natives. Though sickness is a very depressing thing, the men are astonishingly cheerful; indeed, I think the spirit of the British soldier is wonderful; no matter how uncomfortable he may be, he always has a smile and makes the best of things.

For many weeks the heat seemed almost unbearable. The myriads of tiny ants in the hospital are quite a problem, they are over and into everything, so that we have to stand the legs of the beds, tables, and ice chest in tins of water, and at first, it was a race to see who could acquire the tins first! It is a most unpleasant sight to enter a ward and see the pillow of a helpless patient simply swarming with these little creatures. Another thing we are short of is bottles. Our medicine cupboards consist of a motley. The orderlies are very clever in adapting every kind of packing-case to our needs, in the way of tables, cupboards, etc.



## DATE WEATHER

The nights are delightful. We sleep on the roof and have a glorious canopy of stars over us. The drawback is having to haul one's bed up two flights of stairs, very steep, as there is no one to lend a hand. No. 32 B.G.H. is across the river and consists of huts and tents and has about one thousand beds. 'Tis said, the jackals come and nibble the toes of the sleeping nurses!

A walk through the bazaars is rather an amusing experience, as the escort invariably carries a small cane with which he clears a path in front of you, right and left. He sends the natives scuttling!

*August, 1916*

This month we have what is known as 'date weather,' intense heat and no wind, when the dates come to maturity. Even the flies succumb to the heat, but the sandflies, which are very minute and whose bite is apt to bring on a high fever, so-called, 'sandfly fever.' The men suffer dreadfully from heat rash, and all those, who are able, keep bathing themselves with a soothing lotion, which is passed from bed to bed.

One man wrote home that when he couldn't get enough to drink, he just put a cup to his cheek and caught the drops! I never before



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

realized how briny perspiration is; the story of Lot's wife often comes to mind!

*August 12, 1916*

By degrees the hospital has become fairly ship-shape. At first we had to improvise all sorts of contrivances till supplies began to come up the river. Occasionally everything would be held up for days by a boat sticking in the mud, for as the summer advanced the river got lower and lower.

*August 24*

Cholera has developed among the patients, which has upset us all very much. Two days later, I found to my horror, on coming on duty, that two of my convalescent patients were dead, having died of cholera in the night, only ill a few hours. Fresh cases develop every day. The work is very strenuous. There is little one can do for cholera patients, though the results from intravenous injections are wonderful. A cholera hospital has been opened and the patients suffering from it are removed as quickly as possible.

*September 12, 1916*

Have gone on night duty at my own request, and am quite enjoying the change of work,

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE

though at times it is lonely being the only woman in the place, as I have the oversight of the entire hospital.

All our supplies come from India, and, with the irregularity of service and shortage of transport, at times the difficulties are great. As we have no other but Tigris water to drink, it all has to be chlorinated, with unpleasant results and a most disagreeable taste. The sand-storms, which are fairly frequent, are enough to break your heart, dust over and into everything and no way of keeping it out.

*September 12, 1916*

I have sent in my application for leave to go home, as the work is slacker now and I am pretty weary.

The Matron-in-chief has written me a very nice letter in reference to my departure. She would like me to stay on as Assistant Matron of a new hospital down at Basra. She thinks my management of the orderlies would be excellent. I am quite pleased, as I am not a 'Regular.'

*October, 1916*

Off at last! Lots of people to see seven of us go. Three of the Sisters are sick.

An interesting trip down the river — seeing

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

the progress made in building the narrow-gauge railway and the tiny trains creeping along — also the numerous permanent camps. We are towing two barges on either side full of patients, who lie on stretchers.

... I thoroughly enjoy being a real passenger on the ship to Bombay and spent a few strenuous days before embarking on the *Assaye* for Alexandria. I have had three subalterns allotted to my care during the voyage, two amputations and a T.B., all nice boys, who give me just enough to do to keep me from getting bored. They are always merry and bright. We trans-shipped at Alexandria and were shocked to learn of the torpedoing of the *Britannic* at Marseilles. Our patients on the *Assaye* were to have gone on her, but fortunately had not been transferred.

The Y.M.C.A. is the greatest benefactor to the men. I don't know how they would exist without it at the Front. It is the only haven of rest the Tommies have.

After leaving Mesopotamia in October, 1916, Miss Galt went to Montreal for a few months' rest.

London, *October*, 1917

After an absence of some months, the difference between conditions in London and America

## LONDON IN 1917

is very striking. The darkened streets impress one as forcibly as anything, the lights so few and far between with darkened shades. In order to help the wayfarer a little, the edges of the curb are frequently whitewashed. One thing which oppresses me greatly is the tremendous number of wounded; the streets swarm with 'hospital blue,' if not Tommies wearing complete blue suits, it is officers with blue brassards.

Women are doing so many new things and really quite heavy work at times, like railway porters, but everybody accepts everything as a matter of course.

The food question is becoming quite a serious one for the housekeeper. A half-pound of sugar per head per week per person and six ounces of bread daily. The allowance of coal, too, is strictly controlled and of course meat, only two and a half pounds a week per person. At the Canteen, in helping the cold meat, every portion has to be weighed two ounces each. Don't imagine from this we are not getting enough to eat, only that it does require a good deal of planning for meals. The Government confiscates all the sugar coming from Canada, and if you are aware it is coming you pay a fine.

The Lord Mayor's Show today was very typi-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

cal of present activities, being largely a naval and military parade. In addition to troops there were a couple of tanks, clumsy-looking<sup>b</sup> monsters, a captured German aeroplane, etc., lorries full of munitions workers, girls making shells, etc.

While awaiting developments as regards work in France, I help at the Eagle Hut and Maple Leaf Canteens. Serving three hundred and thirty suppers on my shift at the former was my biggest night. Though the Maple Leaf is smaller, there is generally a great rush of work, especially on 'Trench Night,' when the men arrive straight from the trenches, for many the first leave they have had in fourteen or fifteen months. They come straight from the trains, still carrying the mud of France on them.

London, *November 1, 1917*

Another air-raid. Anti-aircraft guns are distributed all over London. The latest story told in connection with the Piccadilly Circus raid is that when the contents of S. & E.'s windows were hurled into the street, among them were several dressed models and the St. John Ambulance, thinking they were victims, rushed to render first aid!

## HOSPITAL AT ARC-EN-BARROIS

*December, 1917*

What an appalling disaster at Halifax! For the moment, the Germans certainly seem to 'have the Devil's own luck': but maybe it is only the case of 'the darkest hour before the dawn.'

Various opportunities for work have presented themselves since my return, among them to be matron of a hospital for Tommies, but I have decided to go to an Anglo-French hospital at Arc-en-Barrois, Haute Marne. The hospital is financed by English people, the staff is British, but the patients are French. The Duc de Penthievre has loaned his château, and, as it lies somewhere to the south of Verdun, most of the casualties come from that region.

*Arc-en-Barrois, 1918*

Chaumont, the terminus of my railway journey, is the American G.H.Q., and I was met by the motor from Arc and driven over to the château, about twenty-six kilometers, through great deer forests stretching away on all sides around the village. There are many wild boars, who are multiplying very fast and causing the farmers much damage to their farms.

The weather is pretty severe and the house barn-like! The wards are fitted with stoves,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

which keep them comfortable, but our bedrooms are glacial! Two wards have been assigned to me, Foch and Kitchener. (If there is anything in a name, they should be the most important!) There is also a small ward for women who come in for operations. One woman of thirty-nine has had eleven children, and for the last six months has had to work in the woods to support herself and her seven living children. The whole family go out, including the fifteen-months baby, and work from 5 A.M. till 9 P.M. sawing wood and even cutting down trees!!

*February, 1918*

The weather is so glorious it makes me long to be out-of-doors. Such warm sunshine, and now the work is fairly light. Whenever it is warm enough, all the blessés, who can either walk or be carried out, have their dinners in the garden, which they all love.

*March, 1918*

Orders for evacuating the hospital in preparation for the offensive, so all the patients who can be moved are being sent to hospitals in the interior and no one may go outside the three-kilometer limit. The new German offensive has caused deep gloom, but very little comment is



## THE BOMBARDMENT OF PARIS

made by the villagers; they seem to accept it in an unemotional way. The news of the bombardment of Paris by 'Big Bertha' literally took our breath away. An American officer, who happened to be in Paris when it first occurred, told us nothing unusual was noticeable among the populace. They are wonderfully self-contained for such an excitable people.

The awful attack still continues; the hospital is almost empty in readiness if necessary and the medical staff is constantly on hand.

*Easter Day, 1918*

Our minds are full of nothing but this awful conflict which is raging. How wonderfully our men are holding on against such deadly assaults. We had a fine address from Bishop Brent today; he is Chaplain to American G.H.Q. He spoke so well on the goodness of God we could not but feel heartened in this time of dire need. One can only say, 'How long, O Lord, how long!'

From being a sleepy little hamlet, Arc is developing into quite a busy centre. One hears English being spoken on every side. It was a great surprise to the villagers to find that we spoke the same language as the Americans, for to them America is a very distant land! In fact,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

one of the nuns at the convent asked me if I understood their language, and in that case would I write a notice intimating that their property was private and no trespassers allowed.

*May, 1918*

It thrills me the way our men and the French, who certainly are magnificent, are holding the line, but, oh! at what a cost!

There are many changes here, so I am going to take a short leave before taking up fresh work. I have grown very fond of my poilus, who for the most part are sturdy peasants, many of them about forty or so, and so appreciative of the care given them and so willing to be of use when possible. The work has been very strenuous at times.

*Paris, May 25, 1918*

Had an awful time trying to get a taxi on our arrival at 11 P.M., and before going to our hostel we had to obtain bread tickets at the station. One of the most noticeable things in Paris is the varied window decorations in the way of paper designs. In order to protect the people inside a room from breaking glass, paper is pasted across the pane, and the ingenuity used in making fancy patterns is quite remarkable. Of course

## PARIS IN JUNE, 1918

they used strips of paper in the early days of the war at La Panne, but with no decorative imagination.

On the morning of the 23d I was wakened at 6.30 by Big Bertha bombarding Paris; it fired every fifteen minutes till about ten, ceased for a little, began again, and finally stopped at 11.30. The report is tremendous, but no one seemed to take much notice. They are astonishingly calm.

Paris, *June 11, 1918*

In Paris, waiting for my papers for Hôpital Mobile No. 1. In the mean time am working at the A.F.F.W. at their rooms, and also doing refugee work in the Vestiare at the Gare du Nord. It is pitiful to see the poor things come in with literally nothing, and it is quite a problem deciding which is the most necessary article to give. I also enjoy working at the Leave Club, which is Canteen work.

Paris, *June 20, 1918*

The whole city is covered with proclamations, 'Au Peuple de France,' to remain calm and serene, during these undoubtedly anxious and uncertain days. The last week of my stay we had raids almost nightly. Apart from the risk of

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

bombs, it is no wonder if people get nervous and irritable, losing their sleep every night, for the shrieking of the sirens and roar of the artillery make rest an impossibility.

Paris —

I am not signing on for any definite time, but have only agreed to go for some weeks, when possibly this awful battle may be over. Every day one hears such harrowing tales, it seems one must do whatever little one can to help. The things some of the hospitals have gone through are beyond belief!

This morning I spent at one of the French hospitals, watching one of their well-known surgeons do Carrel dressings, and it really was a treat, he was so adroit, everything went without a sound or a hitch, and the two hours flew! Tomorrow morning I am going to the Ambinu Hospital. Of course we used all these things, but had not all the extra touches you get here.

I have just been told my shutter was not sufficiently closed, and we might have a raid!

Paris — *next day*

I spent an interesting morning seeing the Ambinu dressings; the poor men were shockingly

## FORGES-LES-EAUX

burned, one poor fellow had been in a tank which caught fire. The Ambinu is wonderful.

All trained nurses are under the orders of the War Office, so I am waiting here till I hear where I am to be stationed.

She was sent to Forges-les-Eaux early in July, 1918, Hôpital Mobile No. 1.

Hôpital-Mobile No. 1  
Forges-les-Eaux, *July*, 1918

Behold me in my new diggings! Last week we had four disturbed nights, and on Sunday, no sooner was one 'Alerte' over than a second sounded. Thursday night was the worst. A most violent barrage, and the bombs really sounded as though they were bursting right around us. Fortunately the material damage does not amount to very much.

I arrived here about noon, a pleasant little town with a history dating back to ancient times owing to its medicinal springs.

As usual in military life, my arrival appeared to be unexpected, even though my early departure from Paris had been urged. I had no work assigned me for a couple of days, so had an opportunity of familiarizing myself with the town and vicinity. In addition to our Hôpital

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Mobile 1, there is a French fracture hospital and a big British Veterinary one, a wonderful place and well worth a visit, everything so spick and span, lovely flower beds, and all the animals so well looked after, on the same system as the men, even down to identification marks! There are twenty-three hundred horses and mules. It is most interesting to see the operations there, but the poor gassed horses — so terribly burned — made me sick.

Our hospital consists of a number of huts, which can easily be taken apart and moved from place to place. Each ward has about forty beds, and, as the patients are constantly changing, they are known by number rather than name, a very different arrangement from Arc, where one had time to grow really attached to the individual. Except for the nursing staff and Directrice, everybody is French, and no one speaks English. Though under the military, the atmosphere is very different from a British Military Hospital, discipline being much more slack here.

Most of the cases are badly wounded, with very heavy dressings, and those with 'Dakin' keep one constantly busy, and any possible spare time is devoted to keeping up the supply of pads, etc.

## HOSPITAL EVACUATIONS

A Scotch nurse here told me something of some of their experiences in their recent evacuations. One of them had seventy kilometers — i.e., forty-two miles — to walk to a railway, and they had with them twenty lunatics trying to get them to a place of safety! The other, as she slipped out of the back of the garden at midnight, the German patrol entered the front, and as they were firing, without aiming, with revolvers, it was an anxious moment. They had two kilometers to go before joining the rest of the ambulances, along a road, above which the enemy planes were flying so low they could see the iron crosses, and they were dropping bombs all the time: the greatest fear was lest their white caps should be seen. They had fifty kilometers to walk before reaching a railway, among crowds of refugees on one side of the road, and advancing troops on the other! She said one really funny sight was an empty hearse drawn by four oxen, and full of furniture and children with their toys. The animals the villagers were obliged to leave behind were pitiful, especially the cows, lowing to be milked, and of course everyone had to press on. They lost everything they possessed, and had been to England to be refitted and were rejoining ambulances at the front. What these women have gone



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

through! — and they were so quiet about it all. Of course, before they themselves took to flight, the patients had all been removed, except the twenty lunatics, and I think they had a pretty hard time with them!

The last few days in Paris I used to help at the British Army and Navy Club, and enjoyed it thoroughly; it was really very nice talking to Tommies again.

Forges-les-Eaux, *July* 16, 1918

The guns are going incessantly and numbers of troop trains have passed going to the Front, easily recognizable owing to the bunches of green on the carriages. Our huts are right beside the railway lines. The weather is very hot and muggy, with quite a little rain and lots of mud, making the going between the huts poor. The communiqués of the last few days have been wonderfully cheering and we were thrilled to hear Château-Thierry was ours again.

*August —*

In August I went on night duty. Whenever we could, Sister T. and I have been going to see a Canadian Sergeant who was moved to the Fracture Hospital. He was always delighted to see us, and we were greatly shocked to learn of

## NEW WOUNDED

his sudden death from embolism. We got flowers from the Veterinary Hospital and the Colonel sent a company from the A.V.C. and there was also a French escort. Miss T. and I walked behind the 'fourgon' as chief mourners. A French Protestant pastor held the service.

*August 14*

We have had a very strenuous time since we started our offensive. First word came that all the patients must be evacuated, to make room for the freshly wounded, so as many as could be moved were shipped off, and a few hours later the new ones began to pour in. The train runs right alongside the hospital, and the men are carried into a big hut, where they are dumped down on stretchers, till there is room for them in the Salle des Entrés, where they are received, washed, wounds redressed, when necessary, then X-rayed and operated upon. It is a fearfully slow process in our little hospital, as we only have room for fifteen at a time in the Salle des Entrés. The more seriously wounded are, of course, attended to first, so that the lesser ones have to wait hours. The barrack where they all waited their turn was a sight! About one hundred and eighty-five men, mostly stretcher cases, all lying in their gory

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

clothes as they were carried off the train, and the walking cases lying about any and everywhere, for the most part sound asleep, utterly worn out with fatigue. Being night, the place was feebly lighted and you had to pick your way with great care for fear of stumbling over some one, as they simply dropped asleep as they happened to be. With our two hundred and fifteen cases the theatre was going day and night for twenty-four hours. We had three relays of surgeons. Every case had to be operated upon and evacuated again, whenever possible, within forty-eight hours, to make room for another lot, and it meant some 'hustling'! Fortunately the greater number were fairly light and they were all in excellent spirits over their successes. They are really splendid, they are so patient, and those that had to wait till the last must have been terribly weary and hungry, as they could not have any solid food.

Within two days an empty hospital train took nearly everybody away again, and a few hours later, we had the whole performance over again. Even when they were all sorted out, we had more patients than beds, so some still had to continue sleeping on stretchers. I thought my back would crack in two, washing patients! We are not

## PARIS IN OCTOBER, 1918

a very big staff to tackle such a prolonged rush, being only eight trained and five V.A.D.'s. Among the first convoy there were ever so many black troops, mostly Moroccan and Algerian. The English-speaking patients are quickly evacuated to our own hospitals.

September was a bad month for flu, so many of the male staff coming down with it

Paris, *October 1*, 1918

After a very strenuous time I am very glad to have a week's holiday. Paris is a very different place from what it was in June. Then everyone was living in a state of uncertainty and depression, whereas today everybody is quite the reverse.

I am mentally greatly torn about going home for a while, but with these thrilling events and the steady advance of our troops, I feel as though I could not leave, now, above all, when there is the possibility of Peace being within reasonable reach. Can you imagine anything more marvellous than to see the victorious Allied troops march down the Champs Elysées!!

We had an amusing incident this afternoon at a tea-shop where formerly one could get bread and butter, but today they said we could only

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

get tea, as the police had stopped them three weeks before. While in the middle of our tea-drinking, suddenly I felt a small package thrust into my hand by the manageress without a word, and this contained two slices of brown bread and butter! People are allowed to bring their food with them.

We had a very interesting chat at dinner with one of the four at table. She lived in Germany, first at Leipzig and then at Chemnitz for two years after the war broke out. She was a New Zealander, and finally was sent to England, her health breaking down under the shortage of nourishing food. That was two years ago, and even then they got only two ounces of butter a week, one half pound of meat, and one egg. She says she cannot understand how they have managed during the last two years. As far as her personal treatment was concerned, they were kindness itself. The English women had to report at the police station twice a day.

*November, 1918*

There is an unsettled feeling about the hospital; as we may move on any time nearer the Front, the difficulty is to decide on a place. The war news is so wonderful, the end really seems to

## THE ARMISTICE

be in sight. The huts are all being taken down and I went to Paris for a few days to learn on my return that we were leaving the following day. We had a train full of hospital material, some old-fashioned first-class coach, no corridor; we each had a corner, but it meant very cramped sleeping-quarters for the three nights, and as the carriage was not heated, even with every imaginable kind of wrap we were frozen. As for our ablutions, we never were able to manage more than our faces and teeth, as the only water we had had to be fetched from the engine whenever we stopped long enough, and then it was too precious to use for washing, but had to be kept for tea or coffee, as we had our rations with us. You can hardly imagine a more tired, grubby, and chilly lot than we were when we arrived at Nancy! After spending nearly a day and a night on the train, we found ourselves just outside Paris the morning the Armistice was signed, and were overjoyed to find we had a four-hour post, so took a tram into the city and found ourselves in the midst of wild excitement, everybody shouting, singing, and waving flags; it was a memorable sight, indeed.



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

Hôpital-Mobile No. 1

Nancy, France, *November 28, 1918*

I have just got back from such a wonderful trip, I feel I must tell you all about it.

Monday morning I had just had my coffee and had decided to be really lazy and read in bed, when there came a knock at my door, and this was Miss Walsh, to know if I should like to go to Verdun with them. Some Americans had offered to give them a lift and they were starting at 8.30. I wish you could have seen the speed at which I got into my clothes and arrived here (Hotel American) in about twenty minutes! We expected to be back that night, so took nothing with us, and we were gone three days and two nights!

We finally got under way about ten o'clock; we four nurses and two American Captains, one a medical man, rode in a touring car, which had broken down, and were towed by a big lorry, so naturally we did not go as fast as we might, and instead of arriving at Verdun at one as we expected, lunched at Commercy about 2.30 instead! We pushed on from there, a cheerful party, and going over such thrillingly interesting ground, as it was the scene of all the American fighting, and as both men were familiar with every inch, they



## THE CROWN PRINCE'S DUGOUT

could tell us everything. It was getting dark at St. Mihiel, which is nothing but a mass of shattered houses, but every village and town we passed through was nothing but a heap of stones and the ground pitted with shell-holes. They said the dugout occupied by the Crown Prince at St. Mihiel was wonderful, walls of steel six feet thick, concrete floors, etc., etc. The camouflaging of the roads was very interesting, and of course trenches and dugouts everywhere. I wish you could all have seen it.

By the time we reached Verdun, it was pitch dark, so they said it was no use stopping, as there was no place to stay, the city being in ruins, and we had better come on with them to their quarters at Dun-sur-Meuse, so on we went only to learn on our arrival there that the Division had moved on forty kilometers further, so our nice little arrangement about being sent back in one of their ambulances was knocked on the head. In order to prevent our kind friends getting into trouble, we had to pretend that we had been picked up from a broken-down car and it was being repaired! There was a small staff at Dun, and the Adjutant was most awfully kind; they fixed us up four cot beds and blankets in their dining-room, formerly the German field hospital,

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

a tumble-down sort of place, and in order to reach it kindly provided us each with a man's pair of boots, as the mud was awful, and I wish you could have seen us paddling over in this huge footgear, carrying our own in our hands! They also provided a most excellent supper of beans, potatoes, toast, preserved apricots, and fudge! It was ten o'clock by this time, and we were thankful to tumble onto our cots, having travelled one hundred and forty miles. The only mirror we possessed was a pocket one. Luckily Miss Dahl had a comb!

The next morning we breakfasted with the staff, about eight men, all charming, and had delicious pancakes and syrup! I nearly forgot to mention that Captain Williams turned up early on a motor-cycle, unshaven and unwashed, having travelled practically all night, to let us know his Division was so far advanced he could not help us on our homeward way, but he had learned Dun was a railhead and possibly we might with luck get a train! He really was most awfully good, but so was everyone all the time. Sure enough, a train was booked to leave shortly, so they sent us down to the line in a car, and we were lucky in finding there was a first-class coach, though a terribly old one, attached, which we

## TRAVELING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

shared with three refugees and an American Captain. The women had been prisoners for four years, and told us many things, harrowing and otherwise, and among the latter was the fact that they had been fed nearly all the time by the American Red Cross Commission through the Spanish authorities. As it was a single line and newly laid, the train simply crept along, and only reached Verdun, twenty-two miles, at dark. The line still showed the recent fighting, including dead Boches, but it is nearly cleaned up.

Upon arrival at Verdun, picking our way across what was a station, the R.T.O. regarded us with scorn and horror at the idea of wanting accommodation for the night — 'quite unobtainable'; we must take another train to the next station and learn there what prospect there was! This time we travelled in a cattle truck! — and when we got to Dagny, seven kilometers away, the American station agent said the only decent train left the next evening at 6.30! — and he would give us his room. He was a very rough diamond, but a diamond all the same, and we were lodged in his place and taken excellent care of by the nice French couple who owned the place.

The next morning he sent us down to Verdun by a motor hand-car which dropped us off at

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

a very muddy spot, but a kindly American officer gave us a lift in his car to the Citadel, where the Commandant provided us with a guide, who took us all over. It is like an underground city, and during the attacks has housed as many as fifteen thousand men! After that we wandered about what once was a city, but now is literally nothing but a heap of ruins; it is appalling. We paused at a place which I suppose had been a residential square, but now nothing remains but a heap of stones, and there we saw a French Colonel with his two daughters, whom he had brought to see what was their home four years ago, and without exaggeration there was NOTHING there, and, in addition, the son had just been killed. It is bad enough for the poor, but they can be helped, but it must be awful for the better classes. When we had walked about for an hour, we more than realized what a ridiculous request we had made in asking for a lodging, for it was impossible to find a whole building!

In a way, even sadder to me than a demolished city is a battle-scarred forest, for the former may be rebuilt, even though it take years, but how long it will be before those skeletons and stumps of trees can be replaced by their former beauty!

The station was quite a sight, full of Ameri-

## A LIFT IN A CADILLAC

cans, seven hundred of them, waiting for a train to take them on their first leave, seven days at Aix-les-Bains. They were squatting everywhere; it was a dreary day, what with mud and rain, but some of them had made a fire in the middle of what had been the waiting-room, and were sitting about on the fallen bricks and stones. They very kindly cleaned up some of their drinking-cups, and we had a reviving cup of chocolate from the Y.M.C.A. there.

At 2 o'clock, finding our hand-car was not available for another hour, we thought we would start to walk, as our feet were nearly congealed, and just as we set out in the mud we luckily saw a touring car and signalled to ask for a lift. The occupant turned out to be an American Major with his orderly, and he very kindly took the four of us in, intending to drop us at Dagny, but he was so pleased to talk to some English women again that he suggested taking us on to Commercy, where we could make better connections for the train, so we only stopped to pick up our extra wraps and say farewell to our French couple, who absolutely refused to take any payment.

We had a most comfortable and of course interesting ride in his Cadillac, and had an excit-

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

ing five-mile race to catch the Paris Nancy express at Commercy, which we just made, reaching here before six o'clock.

So ends a really wonderful trip, which I am more than glad to have had the opportunity of taking.

The hospital expects to leave here on Monday, but everything is so uncertain I shan't believe it till we get started, at least! It seems best to stay till I see how things are going to pan out, as I doubt if the hospital, as such, will exist much longer, and it will certainly be very interesting going up with the Army of Occupation.

Civilians are returning to Nancy at the rate of two thousand a day. The city is swarming with our returned prisoners today, over one thousand arriving yesterday, and we have spent a most interesting though harrowing afternoon, listening to what several of them had to tell us. The French are awfully good to them, doing all they can. The poor things are dressed in any old thing and look like perfect tramps. It seems that last Wednesday the Germans took them five kilometers on their way, and then turned them loose to find the road to the frontier as best they might, giving them one day's ration of bread (such bread, so heavy and hard). They had to



## RETURNING PRISONERS

march about eighty kilometers. It took them three days and at least ten died on the way. Doesn't it seem awful, on their way home, too! They say there really is a revolution in Germany; they saw them tearing down their flag, pulling off their epaulettes, and pinning red tabs on, and disarming the sentries, etc. They also said the Germans themselves were very little better fed than the prisoners. Think of it, those boys, many of them only nineteen or twenty, were given this one ration of bread a day and one bowl of soup made of dried barley and a very little of that, and that was all, and as they received the bread at night, which was supposed to do them for supper and breakfast, they were invariably so hungry they ate it all at once, which meant that they had nothing more till two the next day, when they got the bowl of soup, and they had to work all morning without food. They were kept only six kilometers behind the line and had to carry shells to feed the Boche guns: of course, in direct violation of the Hague Convention.

The last time I was in Paris, I had a talk with an interesting American, who had been seven months up the line with the English. He had become quite an admirer of theirs, and was very



## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

enthusiastic over the good results this nearer acquaintance must make between the nations. He said they were unsurpassed in three things: the Royal Flying Corps, the Artillery, and their Transport Service. But he said he had one great fault to find with them, and that was they were far too good to their prisoners, which certainly is, alas, quite too true, especially when you see our poor fellows returning. The American thinks England will 'have Hell' when her soldiers return; they have seen and learned so much, from the Dominions and Americans, about the difference between Democracy and Caste. The Labor question is going to be an awful problem and Labor will surely lead the world.

Nancy, *December 2*

I thoroughly enjoyed my day in Metz; it was very interesting being in what had been German territory for so long. Everybody appears pleased to belong to France again, and they say the reception given the French at Strasbourg was wonderful. In addition to the joy of victory, there is such an enormous amount of sentiment for Alsace-Lorraine mixed up in it all.

We have no idea of our destination, but hope for something interesting.

## STRASBOURG AND RHEIMS

I bought some real bon-bons at Metz, the first I have seen in years, made of real sugar, which they told us they had concealed all this time! Food seemed plentiful but very dear. The numbers of children impressed me as much as anything; there seemed to be swarms of them.

At Strasbourg milk is practically unobtainable. The footgear is awful, made of either wood or paper. The war bicycles are extraordinary things with double wooden rims in place of rubber, or else a series of little springs on the wheels. You could hardly imagine the people could ride such primitive-looking things, but the substitutes which have been produced for nearly everything are simply wonderful.

Nancy, *December 20, 1918*  
Hôpital-Mobile No. 1

Miss T. and I have had a wonderful two-day trip to Rheims. We went by car from Epernay, where we spent a very interesting couple of hours going over the champagne cellars. Verdun struck me as the picture of desolation, but Rheims is even more pitiful. There stands that glorious shattered shell of a Cathedral brooding over the complete collapse of a large and flourishing city — not one house left standing! It is awful! We spent hours picking our way over the débris

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

of what had once been stately houses and wide streets, now nothing but piles of stones. The only feeding place that exists at present is an underground cellar where some heroic French and a couple of Red Cross American ladies keep the entire population alive, for there everyone goes from the Mayor to the ordinary visitors like ourselves. We were provided with one plate, one tin mug, spoon and fork, no knife, ate off an ordinary deal table grown dark by constant use, and sat on benches and had most excellent food.

In walking about the house we passed the night in, it was necessary to look out for missing floors or ceilings. Truly it was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. In the silence of the night it was an eery feeling to have it broken by the sound of falling stones from collapsing houses.

Hôpital-Mobile No. 1  
Wiesbaden, Germany, *January 1, 1919*

How little any of us thought this time last year that I should be spending my next 'jour de l'an' in Germany! — and very nice it is to be with the army.

Wiesbaden is a very fine modern city, with beautiful gardens and delightful possibilities for long walks in the surrounding wooded hills.

## AT WIESBADEN

The inhabitants are most amiable, in fact, almost too much so, whether from genuine motives, or a sort of propaganda to make us forget their past deeds, I know not. It is difficult for us to judge properly of the food situation, as we get everything from the Service de Santé, but even we have a very strict rationing as to quantity, owing to the difficulty of getting supplies, and I imagine the people are pretty short. There is absolutely no milk or butter, but sugar they seem to have in plenty. The Germans don't look underfed, but the children are pale and weedy, I suppose due to the lack of fat. The shop windows are very attractive, but everything is frightfully expensive, even allowing for the depreciation of the mark. Real tea and cocoa are almost unobtainable. Everything is made up in substitute form and tastes accordingly! The effect of the war is most noticeable in the boot shops, where they show nothing but extraordinary creations of wood and paper. I am bringing home a pair of paper slippers and a bandage to show you.

We have been lucky in being given a casino for the hospital. It was used for that purpose by the Germans, too, and is beautifully situated on the side of a hill, above the Kurhaus, in nice

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

grounds and with a lovely view. We have good steam-heated rooms, which is decidedly luxurious after the barracks, in a small hotel near the hospital. The manager, who talks English well, is a burly German wearing the ribbon of the Iron Cross.

On Sunday afternoon we were at a very good concert in the handsome concert hall of the Kurhaus, simply packed. But as I sat and listened and looked at those German faces, I couldn't help thinking of the last concert I was at, held in a Y.M.C.A. hut crowded with American soldiers, listening to a colored band, led by a stalwart Red Indian; outside the rain pouring, seas of mud, and every house razed to the ground, Varennes in the Argonne, and all that discomfort and desolation caused by these misguided and world-conquest desirous Boches.

Work being slack and likely to become more so, I decided to return to England the end of January, but am very glad I have had the chance of being for a while in the occupied territory: a satisfactory ending to all these years of war nursing.

We have discovered we can get the most delicious cakes with tea at the Kurhaus. Really such cakes we haven't seen for years. Then there

## THE PEACE CONFERENCE

is a daily concert with an excellent orchestra. Certainly to the casual observer the war doesn't seem to have affected the life of these people at all; it makes one long to bring it home to them more forcibly. On the surface they appear quite pleased to have the French here.

*January 13, 1919*

Today commences the most momentous meeting the world has ever seen, it seems to me; the Peace Conference. God grant that the delegates may be given wisdom to give a wise decision on all the tremendously important questions arising.

Last night we were invited to a show given by French artists to the troops at the Front. It was held in the Opera House, and it was a wonderful sight to see the place packed with the French blue army uniform and really quite thrilling to think we were actually in a German theatre in Germany. Only the military were present and about fifteen nurses.

*Paris, January 24, 1919*

I have grown greatly attached to this 'pleasant land of France.' In fact, I had no idea how strongly she had wound her tendrils round my heart till this last journey; such a beautiful day, Nature so serene, and passing one destroyed

## LETTERS FROM ARMAGEDDON

town and village after another, it was enough to bring tears to one's eyes, especially coming from Germany, where every town is intact; well they carried out their idea that the proper way to make war was in the other person's country! The Boche is disgustingly amiable, very glad the war is over, and counting the days till they can invade our countries again in a commercial invasion, hoping by their conciliatory attitude to make us all forget the war. But as for thinking he is glad to have us in his country and keeping the watch on the Rhine, in his place, there never was a greater mistake.

Some of us went to a concert in the ex-Kaiser's palace at Wiesbaden, now the General Commanding Headquarters. We were taken over the various rooms. The table was laid for dinner with all the Kaiser's appointments, so really it was rather 'chic' to be wandering about his rooms and quite at home. How does he feel now, I wonder, and what will they do with him. The Peace Conference has a terrific responsibility.

THE END













